San Francisco 8 Update (See page 4)

COMMEMORATOR

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Youthful Energy, Wisdom of Experienced Activists Combine in CCBPP Membership Campaign

CCBPP Photo

CCBPP Photo

Melvin Johnson (left) CCBPP Administrative Assistant, signs up a new member to help build the organizing campaign.

At the 41st Anniversary of the founding of the BPP on October 28, 2007, CCBPP Chairman Melvin Dickson (right) gave a tour of the CCBPP office to Dr. Melvin Newton.

By Commemorator Staff

Volunteers with Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party's (CCBPP) Membership Reaffirmation Campaign led a series of events this past summer and fall that brought together new members of all ages with former Panthers and long-time CCBPP members, encouraging newcomers and our youth to learn historical lessons from our movement to apply in the daily, full-time professional organizing necessary to make the Panther Ten Point Program a reality. Distribution of *The Commemorator* this autumn augmented this primarily Bay Area-based membership drive with news of organizing efforts and messages of solidarity from one end of the country to the other and reaching as far as the Caribbean.

CCBPP Administrative Assistant Melvin Johnson reported that this year *The Commemorator* was distributed on college campuses from New York City to southern California; to union members in Seattle, Washington; to community activists in Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Memphis, Dallas and Houston; and in rural communities of Missouri, Arkansas and Alabama. It was carried back to Haiti by Haitian rights activist and singer Annette "So An" Augusta.

The Bay Area section of the membership campaign featured house-to-house community canvassing of a 20-block area of West Oakland — birthplace of the BPP — and another 20-block area of low-income South Berkeley, California, the location of CCBPP's administrative office. CCBPP organizers gave talks to audiences of college students and youth groups throughout the fall in central California and carried out a Black Panther Party 41st Anniversary Celebration in October.

As CCBPP Chairman Melvin Dickson, one of the Panther breakfast

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In Memoriam
Jimmy Milton Slater

September 3, 1946 – November 27, 2007

By Melvin Dickson

Jimmy Milton Slater, a committed comrade and struggler for his class and people, a longtime community activist in the fight to end poverty, police brutality, and exploitation in Black, poor and oppressed communities everywhere; a former cadre and volunteer organizer with the Black Panther Party and a founding member of the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party, succumbed to his battle with lung cancer November 27, 2007 in Oakland, California. He was 61-years old.

Born September 3, 1946 in La Grange, Georgia to Benjamin Franklin Sr. and Claudia Bell Slater, Jimmy Milton Slater was true to his class and people to his last breath. Jimmy knew what it meant to fight for and champion the BPP goals and Ten Point Program. He was an advocate for the principles of revolutionary intercommunalism, as defined in the writings of BPP co-founder, the late Dr. Huey P. Newton.

Jimmy was active in organizing "unity rallies" that brought together former Panthers in the Bay Area in the wake of the assassination of Huey Newton in August 1989 and the many years of government divide-and-conquer tactics, harassment, imprisonment and murder of Panthers for their political beliefs and actions.

On August 25, 1990, on the one-year anniversary of Huey's death, Jimmy and Cynthia, his wife and an organizer in her own right, and the entire family (including Rashidah, the youngest, who was only two-years old at the time) participated in the Commemoration Unity Rally at DeFremery Park in Oakland, the founding event of the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party.

I knew Jimmy Slater for over 35 years. In the formative period of CCBPP, he and I often discussed the course of the struggle under circumstances in which the country then had over 8,000 black elected

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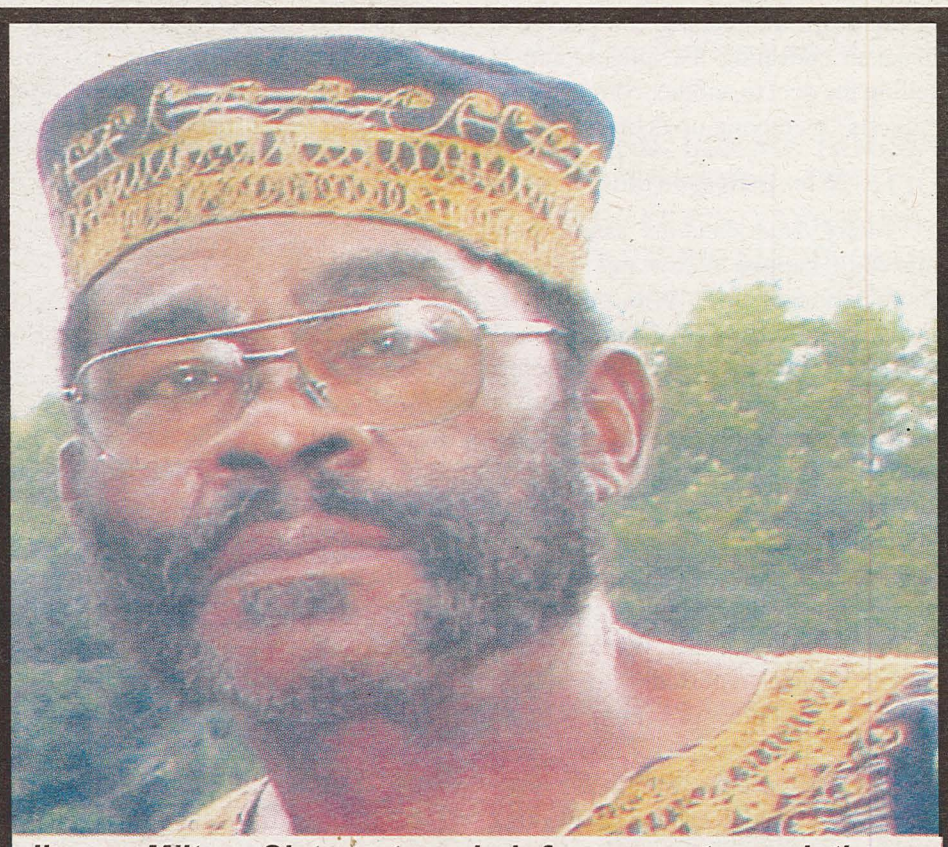

Courtesy of the Slater Family

Jimmy Milton Slater struggled for correct revolutionary practice to advance the liberation of the exploited and oppressed.

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EDITORIAL

Homes, Savings, Dreams – Stolen

The rich keep getting richer and the poor poorer

We want housing fit for the shelter of human beings. *We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.* — Point Number 4, Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program and Platform

A million working class families throughout the United States are struggling to stop their home mortgages from being foreclosed; over 2.5 million have already been foreclosed in the last 18 months. There was a 112% increase in foreclosures in 2006 compared to 705,000 in 2005. The Mortgage Bankers Association estimates that in 2008 another 1.44 million homes will enter foreclosure.

The majority of these, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, are due to defaults on sub-prime loans; more than half of 2007's foreclosures followed the resetting of Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARM) — that is, in this case, *increasing* interest rates due on periodic payments.

A sub-prime mortgage is a mortgage loan made to people who want to buy a home but do not qualify for the best market rates, generally because they are low-income and have bad credit histories. They are given the loans anyway, not out of charity, but because of the profit the loaning company will make in collecting the interest and in selling the debt to another company that "invests" by buying up debts.

Who is Responsible?

Many Americans are asking how this could happen to so many in such a short period of time. Who or what is responsible for this financial disaster?

In the summer of 2006, interest rates were raised by the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board (FRB) following a five-year period of the FRB having set low interest rates. The Federal Reserve had artificially set low interest rates in the aftermath of the dot-com bubble burst and the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center attack, reportedly to give a boost to the depressed economy.

The stated premise of the federal government's actions was that a low-interest rate would encourage working people to spend and, hence, stimulate the economy. But in 2001, the equity held by the average homeowner had already reached a record low 46% of market value, while rising housing markets inflated the values of nearly all homes. Meantime, faced with skyrocketing costs for education, transportation and basic goods and services, many homeowners used their homes to secure credit cards and other forms of debt. Fewer homeowners were paying on principal. Workers were now retiring with their mortgages intact versus paid in full.

According to a recent Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies on sub-prime loans from 1995 to 2005, across the nation, low-income Blacks, Hispanics and other minority borrowers helped fuel a multi-year housing boom. People were buying houses at a record rate.

About 40% of Hispanics and 55% of Blacks who took out mortgages in 2005 got higher-cost loans compared with about 17% of whites and Asians, according to Federal Reserve data. The South Side of Chicago, for example, with a large concentration of minority borrowers, has a high concentration of sub-prime loans and that state's highest foreclosure rate.

Although the federal government guarantees mortgages for *lenders*, it does not protect the *borrower*, nor does mortgage insurance.

If the borrowers lost their jobs, pensions or were forced into lower-paying employment, or if inflation significantly eroded fixed incomes, the writing was already on the wall – more than five years ago – that millions of Americans could soon be joining the ranks of the uprooted, if not homeless.

By 2004, the median American household debt had risen to over $100,000 from less than $60,000 in 1990.

By 2005, the total home mortgage debt in the U.S. had soared to $8 *trillion*, with homeowners enticed into the unlikely dream of ever-rising home sale prices and a continuation of low-interest rates on home mortgages.

Note that $1 trillion of that debt was in the form of interest-only, Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARM) *set to balloon in 2007.*

The Crisis was Predictable and Preventable

Hence, each time the Federal Reserve Board lowered interest rates to encourage borrowing, for the great majority of Americans, this meant working people went deeper, more rapidly and more precariously into debt and it was all a matter of official record. This was not any unknown quantity; *it was preventable.*

The federal government had lowered the interest rates at a point in time when our nation had already lost over three million manufacturing jobs since the year 2000 due to U.S.-based international corporations relocating production abroad — this represented a permanent loss of union-wage jobs, leaving only 7.9% of private sector workers belonging to unions.

The feds took this action at a time when 39% of all private pension funds in the U.S. — affecting some 44 million workers — were underfunded by more than $500 *billion* and large-scale corporate defaults on those pension plans had already begun.

The federal government set this up at a point in history when fully 35% of the U.S. workforce was categorized as so-called "contingent workers," meaning those who make their living from part-time, casual and temporary employment or as adjuncts, the majority of whom are female (women in the U.S. are still paid, on average, only 74 cents for each dollar paid to a man; African American women are paid only 63 cents, while Latinas are paid 56 cents to the dollar).

Literally millions of Americans affected by job and pension losses had no idea at the time they assumed these home mortgage debts that their economic futures were about to be pulled right out from under them – many were cheated out of pension funds they had worked decades to earn.

At the same time, homeowners were encouraged to take loans out on their mortgages, borrowing off the equity to be able to purchase more commodities on credit. With consumer spending accounting for more than 68 percent of the United States' total Gross Domestic Product, the government's interest in fueling consumer spending is obvious.

The financing industry and federal government were well aware that once home prices fell, these "homeowners" would be left owning nothing at all.

The Federal Reserve then started raising interest rates again in the summer of 2006. This caused a large number of people with adjustable (not fixed) rate mortgages to default on their monthly payments at the point that mandatory minimum payments increased sharply while incomes remained relatively unchanged or, worse, drastically declined, e.g., due to job or pension losses.

The Domino Effect

Those with sub-prime loans went first, because they were the ones who had gotten their mortgages with practically no money in the bank and small paychecks coming in, such that any rise in the interest rate for the monthly payment would push them beyond their range of ability to make the payments.

This "crisis" was predictable and was, in fact, the result of federal government policy. They had artificially lowered the rates in the first place, and knew they would need to raise the rates back up again in a matter of years.

The Center for Responsible Living estimated in a study they published in December 2006 that 52 percent of all loans made to African Americans for home purchases last year were sub-prime, with Latinos coming in second at 46 percent.

One of those swept up in the sub-prime frenzy was Dorothy Turner, a Black woman, 38, of Oakland, California, who moved from a homeless shelter to a steady job and hard-to-get federally subsidized housing. Last year, after see-

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"SERVING ALL OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES"

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OPINION

Conditions have Worsened for Low-Income Community in the New Orleans Region Since Katrina

Courtesy of Jacky Waks

After two years, the low-income homes in New Orleans have not been repaired. This house in the 7th Ward is typical of the government's criminal negligence toward the poor and the working class.

By Tajai Calip

Editor's note: *Tajai Calip is the author of the novel* Sins of the Father *and works with children with disabilities in the Oakland Unified School District. She is also a volunteer with the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP).*

It has been two years since the New Orleans tragedy that destroyed many families and homes. The history behind this has caused people to speak out against the insensitivity involved with the activities that took place on that dreadful day. It brought tears to the eyes of spectators who watched on their tube while piles of bodies flooded the city. The nightmare made clear that poor people are not a priority in this country. Lives are being taken for granted, compared to the value of money. In our society we are criticized and forsaken if we don't have wealth. Post-Katrina gives a perfect example of this.

New Orleans wasn't the only victim. People who had to watch their relatives die and not have enough funds to go see about them, learned that they too could be placed in that position.

On average 1,317 lives have ended each month during the two-year study period since the storm. This is the comparison: before the storm the figure was only 924. Approximately 2300 people in a six-month period case study passed — nearly doubling the tragedy during the storm. The mortality rate in the first six months of 2006 was 91 per 100,000 people, up from 62 per 100,000 before Katrina, an increase of 47%.

Housing

Check out what Bill Quigley, professional journalist and correspondent who has been covering the situation in that area since 2005, had to say:

"Renting is so hard in part because there is a noose closing around the housing opportunities of New Orleans' African-American renters displaced by Katrina. They have been openly and directly targeted by public and private actions designed to keep them away. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) just added their weight to the attack by approving the demolition of 2,966 apartments in New Orleans.

"Despite telling a federal judge for the last year and a half that approvals of public housing demolition applications take about 100 working days to evaluate, HUD approved the plan to demolish nearly 3,000 apartments one day after the complete application was filed. HUD says the 3,000 apartments are scheduled to be replaced in a few years with up to 744 public housing eligible apartments and a few hundred subsidized apartments.

"Unfortunately, HUD's actions are consistent with other governmental attacks on African-American renters. After Katrina, St. Bernard Parish, a 93% white suburb that adjoins New Orleans, enacted a law prohibiting homeowners from renting their property to anyone who is not a blood relative. Jefferson Parish, another majority white adjoining suburb, unanimously passed an ordinance prohibiting the construction of any subsidized housing. The sponsoring legislator condemned poor people as 'lazy', 'ignorant' and 'leeches on society' — specifically hoping to guard against former residents of New Orleans public housing."

Education

An estimated 30,000 children were to enroll at the beginning of the 2007 school year in the New Orleans public school system. Most of the students enrolled in special public schools, called "charter schools". The schools were given tens of millions of dollars from the federal government in extra funds — an amount higher than regular state and local money — to operate.

Unfortunately, the public charter schools are not open to every student who would like to attend. Students are not allowed to enroll if they don't fit a set of selective academic criteria.

Many viewers have argued about why this happened. We have yet to find a satisfying answer to why the levees had to rupture before anything could be done. Top officials in charge were aware of the danger. So why did the levees break?

Children in desperate need of additional help, such as students with academic and emotional disabilities, can be excluded from attending the schools that do have enough funding to offer special academic help.

The charter schools have teachers from accredited colleges and smaller classes to manage a certain amount of students. Enrollment caps prevent classes from being overcrowded.

Employment

Employment was difficult to obtain for the New Orleanians even before Katrina. The unemployment rate for 2004 was a high 12% — double the national rate. Blacks represent two-thirds of New Orleans' population. But 20% of black residents are unemployed, which was higher than the national unemployment rate for all blacks. According to the Bureau of Census 2005: "Poverty rates of individuals in the city (at 23%) were 10 percentage points higher than the national average in 2004, and median family incomes were only two-thirds of the national average."

New Orleans will forever be scarred from the aftermath of destruction. Speeches of possible preventions were announced in every technology possible after the tragedy took place. People throughout the world reached

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San Francisco 8: Six Released on Reduced Bail, Courts Consider Defense Motions

Legal battle continues in police-torture forced false confessions cases dating back to '70s

By Commemorator Staff

Six of the San Francisco 8 were released on bail from San Francisco County jail on orders of Presiding Judge Philip Moscone over the course of four separate hearings held between late August and mid-September 2007. Moscone released Richard O'Neal on August 29, followed the next day by Richard Brown, and in September released Harold Taylor, Ray Boudreaux, Hank Jones and Francisco Torres.

Their release on bail was a victory for these community activists and former Black Panther Party members who had been held since being re-arrested in January 2007 on charges stemming from the murder of a San Francisco police officer, a case that had been thrown out of court in 1975 by a San Francisco judge following a federal court ruling that three of the accused had been tortured by San Francisco and New Orleans police over the course of a five-day period until they signed a pre-written confession. The torture included electric shock, cattle prods, beatings, sensory deprivation and placing plastic bags over their heads and hot, wet blankets over their faces to simulate asphyxiation.

The release of the six men was the culmination of numerous court hearings combined with a groundswell of support from the community. Upon their release, supporters, including a group of high school students from Oakland, surrounded Richard O'Neal and Richard Brown with embraces and expressions of appreciation for their stand and commitment to justice.

Support committees report that churches and mosques are finding out about and lending whatever aid they can to the case, that dates back to J. Edgar Hoover's FBI's campaign to destroy the Black Panther Party. High school classes have come to attend court proceedings in a show of support for the accused. Law schools have hosted forums and showcased the Legacy of Torture documentary, produced by The Freedom Archives, one of the organizations that has been organizing support to demand the men's release.

Defense attorneys have argued before Judge Moscone that there either is no new physical evidence and hence no validity to the prosecution's resurrection of this case, or if there is new physical evidence, the defense counsel have a right to see it.

Photo by Scott Braley

Organizers and supporters celebrate the release, on reduced bail, of six members of the SF 8, who had been held since January 2007.

A multi-agency law enforcement unit called the Phoenix Taskforce is reportedly responsible for bringing the re-arrests and prosecution. Judge Moscone stated that the defense has no right to an explanation of the protocols under which this extraordinary police agency operates, however, the defense does have the right to subpoena documents from each individual agency involved in the taskforce. Membership of the taskforce includes the San Francisco Police Department, the New Orleans Police Department, the FBI, the California Bureau of Investigation and the Attorney General's office.

Chuck Bourdon, attorney for defendant Francisco Torres, argued that latent fingerprint evidence the prosecution claims to be attributed to Torres had been tested at least three times since the 1971 murder, and each time the fingerprints did not match Torres' nor those of any of the defendants. According to official records, this testing was done in 1971 by the FBI and San Francisco Police, in 1972 by the San Francisco Police and again in 1975 by FBI labs.

Hearing dates have been set for January 10 (for defendants to enter pleas) and April 21, 2008 (for the beginning of preliminary hearings).

The California State Appellate Court had agreed to consider a writ for collateral estoppel filed by attorney Randy Montesano on behalf of Harold Taylor, and issued the prosecution a deadline for their response. Collateral estoppel prevents a party to a lawsuit from raising a fact or issue which was already decided in another lawsuit. Montesano seeks a ruling that would prevent the prosecution from trying to use any statements extracted from Taylor's 1971 torture by police – a prior court ruling in 1973 rejected use of these statements by the prosecution, declaring them to be inadmissible as evidence. Montesano said he found it encouraging that his collateral estoppel motion "may yet get a fair hearing."

Herman Bell and Jalil Muntaqim, the remaining two of the San Francisco 8, are not eligible for bail due to sentences still being served in New York State emanating from convictions handed out in the "New York 3" case that defendants maintain was constructed from trumped up charges due to their political activities in the Black liberation movement in the early 1970s. The case against them, supporters say, was based upon fabricated evidence. Supporters explained that the New York 3's trials were rife with prosecutorial improprieties including denial of evidence to the defense. Bell and Muntaqim have been serving out sentences for the past 30 years and would now be parole eligible in New York State except for their being reprosecuted as part of the San Francisco 8 case.

In 2003, the 1973 case was secretly reopened by the United States Department of Justice with funds from the Department of Homeland Security, claiming they had new evidence. Ruben Scott was given complete immunity by a 2004 grand jury in San Francisco for any role he might have played in 1971 connecting him to the death of a San Francisco police officer at the Ingleside Station — in exchange for further cooperative statements.

Attorney Richard Mazer, representing Richard Brown, has shown that the only government "evidence" in this case is based on the contradictory and perjurious testimony of Ruben Scott, whose role as a government informant was bought by offers of immunity. Scott has previously recanted cooperative testimony by explaining that he was tortured in New Orleans by police detectives in 1973 along with other Black activists.

"It seems that after September 11th, the Bush administration, with the help of former Attorney General John Ashcroft, re-implemented COINTELPRO in full force," said Melvin Dickson, Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party Chairman. "The only difference is that it has taken on a new name, the Department of Homeland Security, with the Patriot Act to back it up. There is no new evidence. There is no case. This is a terror tactic against the people."

Mobilizing the Bay Area community to bail hearings

On August 29, James Bustamante, Richard O'Neal's attorney, presented arguments in favor of a reasonable and attainable bail, arguing that the only evidence linking O'Neal to the case

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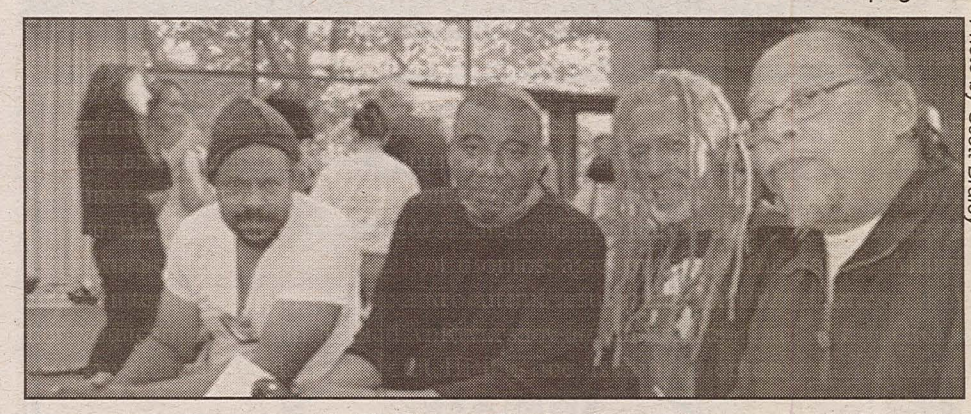

Photo by Scott Braley

Recently released on bail, Harold Taylor (center) surrounded by his comrades and fellow organizers, Arthur League, (left) Elder Freeman (right) and Sundiata/Willie Tate (front) at celebration gathering in San Francisco.

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Black History Month
Whose Version and for What Final Outcome?

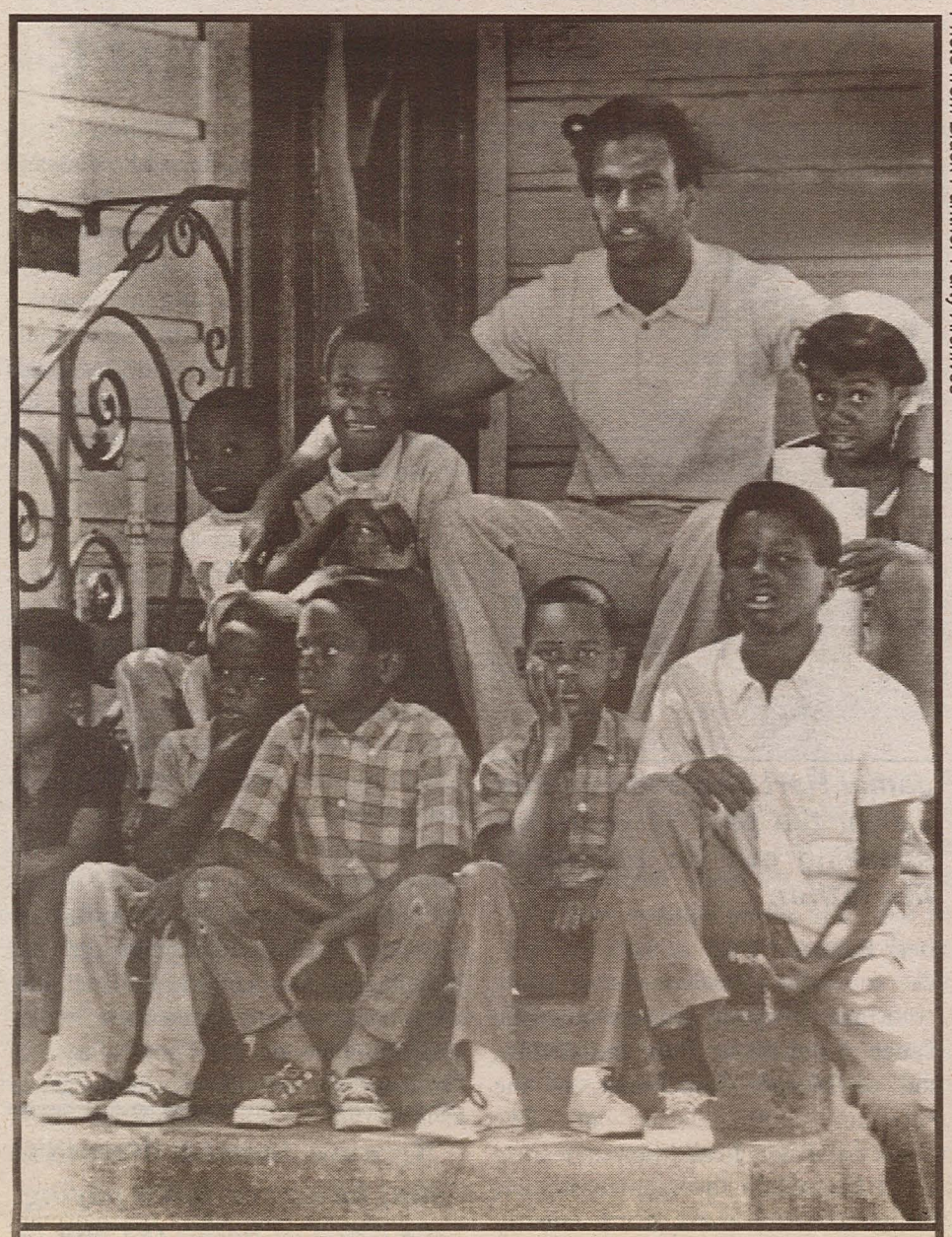

Photo from Black Panther Party Archives

By Melvin Dickson

Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party members are redefining Black History Month to fit its lawful role: a celebration of the history of our labor and our struggle for political power and liberation. In light of the continued attacks by the ruling class on those who work the longest hours for the least pay, the attacks on those who struggle to obtain the necessities of life in this wealthy land — and as the number of those in the United States living in poverty, debt and behind bars continue to increase — we must never lose sight of the fact that the goal of any celebration of Black History *must* be to change it, not for just a few, but for all of us.

Every February throughout the country, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent in the capitalist marketplace in recognition of Black History Month. In between commercials and sit-coms, they give us two-minute biographic cameos about renowned black doctors, engineers, soldiers, photographers or performers, narrated by Black news commentators; then immediately switch to ads for drugs to remedy erectile dysfunction and depression, expensive cars and car insurance.

Painting by Anthony Jones

During the Huey Newton trial of 1968, the rallying cry, "Free Huey" was synonymous with the BPP's demand for living wages and an end to police brutality.

The capitalist marketing machines try to tell us that being African-American is about having a Budweiser poster on your wall or smoking Kool cigarettes. On the so-called educational "special" programs, they even remorsefully recognize that the ruling class of this country initially made its wealth through the use of slave labor — specifically Black slave labor. And they give recognition to the struggles and sacrifices of those who led and participated in the Civil Rights movement of the 50's and 60's, offering biographies of heroes who were assassinated in one way or another for their efforts. Then they laud "how far we have come." They do not speak of the slavery that exists to this day in our prisons through prison labor programs, or in our welfare system through "workfare."

What we have achieved in our history can only be measured by how we use the knowledge of our collective experience to analyze what we must do TODAY to successfully organize and fight for the victory of true political and economic liberation.

We Study History in Order to Change it

We cannot study black history as separate from labor history. When we do, we fail to be able to use what we are studying as an effective weapon towards organizing for real change.

When African men and women were forcefully brought to the new continent, they were brought as labor.

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CCBPP Invites You to Celebrate:

Huey's Birthday
February 17, 2008

Where: Men of Valor Center

6118 International Blvd.
Oakland, California

Time: 3:30 to 6:00 pm

Speakers, Music, and Poetry
Sponsored by the COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE for the BLACK PANTHER PARTY
Call: 510-652-7170

Announcement

Ashby Berkeley Flea Market Will Sponsor
Black History Month Celebration

From 1 pm - 3 pm Saturday, February 23rd, 2008
(West Side of the Ashby BART Station Parking Lot)

Featuring the Commemoration Committee for The Black Panther Party (CCBPP)
Speakers from CCBPP and the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign, Musical Guests and an Open Mike.

BPP memorabilia, t-shirts, posters, buttons, and books will be available.
A benefit for the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign.

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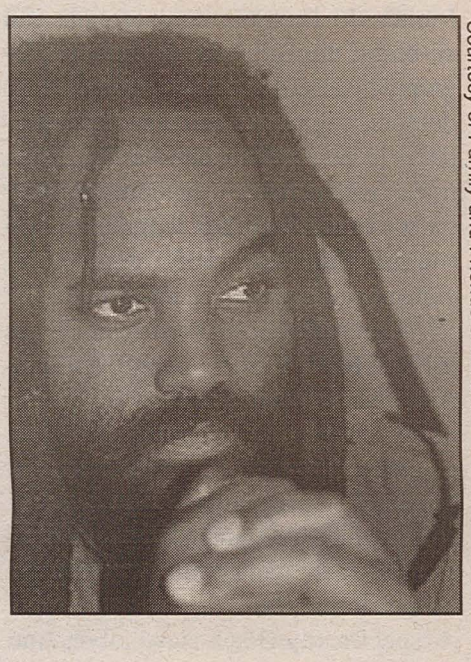
Opinion

Before and Beyond Jena



Courtesy of Family and Friends of Mumia

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Until several months ago, the name "Jena" was doubtless unfamiliar to millions of people in the U.S., until the demonstrations around the case of the Jena 6 brought attention to the small Louisiana town.

But, before the case occurred, the name became known to hundreds (if not thousands) of young Blacks, who came to know, quite intimately, that Jena was just another word for racism, rape, violence and humiliation.

After the ravages of Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans and its surrounding areas, hundreds of imprisoned people were transported to the Jena Juvenile Justice Center (JJJC) in Jena, Louisiana, a place that became their nightmare. The place was so medieval and tortuous in its treatment of young people, that it was severely criticized by a federal judge as a place where people were "treated as if they walked on all fours" before it was closed.

According to published reports put out by the groups Human Rights Watch and the NAACP-Legal Defense Fund (NAACP-LDF), people arriving at JJJC were beaten, brutalized, harassed, and subjected to racist taunts by staff members there. This was after it was reopened in the wake of the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

They were denied things allegedly required by the Constitution like grievance forms, calls to family, or pen and paper. They were treated like they were al-Qaeda and this was Guantanamo — in their country, and in many cases, the state of their births.

The Human Rights Watch and NAACP-LDF have tried to interest state officials in a meaningful investigation, but this has led to little more than lip service.

Although federal officials have reportedly announced their intention to investigate, it is equally doubtful that any real, serious investigation will emerge.

As for the media (except for some segments of the Black press), Jena was little more than a 1 day, or at best, a 3-day story.

Their coverage, such as it was, was little more than a platform to allow local Jenites to exclaim how they weren't racists, and that nooses are just "pranks" used by youngins' to have a little fun.

As ever, there has been little attempt to look backwards into recent history, and now that the last Jena 6 accused is out on bail, little looking to the future as well.

How is it possible in the U.S. today, for people wearing KKK robes to always intone, "I'm not a racist"?

When viewing or listening to locals there, it was almost impossible to not hear the echoes of 50 years ago, when civil rights actions began to stir the South, that "the problem" was, once again, "outside agitators", like the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. They were the problem, not "our darkeys."

Only with the not-too-subtle death threats from Klan-related groups have we seen that the nooses from the so-called "white tree," which sparked much of the Jena phenomenon, was far more than boys being boys.

The Jena case didn't start with 6 young schoolboys.

It won't end with them.

The case stems from something deep and abiding in the American heart and soul.

And it lives in every state of the union — not just in Louisiana.

This shouldn't be the end of the movement; but the spark for more.

All Power to the People!

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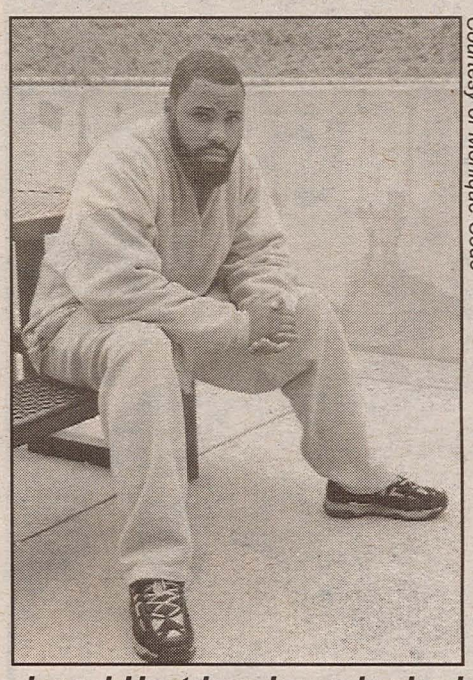
Letters to the Editor

Mumia's Son, Jamal, Needs Your Support



Courtesy of Monique Code

Jamal Hart has been locked up for the past 11 years for speaking out on behalf of his father.

Dear Editor,

Many of your readers saw the Letter to the Editor from Jamal Hart, son of Mumia Abu-Jamal, in the February 2007 issue of *The Commemorator*. In addition to hearing about his efforts to organize support for his father, you may have recently learned that he, too, is writing from prison. I've been corresponding with Jamal and want to provide some background (or a refresher) for those friends and comrades who may also wish to write to this man – a Panther Cub – who was framed by police and given a mandatory 15-year sentence because of his own political activities.

Jamal was well known to police in Philadelphia because he stepped out in a big way and joined the battle to help free his father. He spoke to the media and on college campuses. He went to Goddard College to accept Mumia's college degree, and he spoke out at numerous demonstrations for his father. He was in court all throughout the hearings in the summer of 1995, and he tried to get young people involved in the battle to free Mumia. In 1996, Jamal organized a "Rap Against the Death Penalty" concert in North Philadelphia, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, where the Black Panthers had had their headquarters and where Mumia grew up.

Jamal always talked about the importance of reaching out to the youth. He said, "They're like, 'Well that Panther stuff, that's mom's and dad's old fight. That's not our fight. We're young. Our moms and pops did that.' But we have to let the youth know that when we stand up and we fight, that is for all of us. Mumia's life is important for us all. Mumia continues to fight to his death for us all. When you have a man that can touch all these people from different parts of the globe, *that* is feared by this government."

Because he was Mumia's son, Jamal was much in the public eye, and the police had their eye on him. The date: October 11, 1996. Jamal was on his way to a birthday party with his cousin. Jamal was arrested after police stopped his car in a North Philadelphia neighborhood. Jamal told the press that the cops threatened to blow his head off, referred to his father as a cop killer, planted a loaded .357 magnum on him, then arrested him for possession of the weapon. Jamal's attorney Elizabeth Ainsle told the *Philadelphia Daily News* there were "mind-boggling coincidences" in the cops' story. She said the gun had been stolen three years earlier from a restaurant and that the theft report on the stolen gun was made by the same cop who claims to have found the gun on Jamal.

Because Jamal had more than two previous felony convictions, the federal authorities came in and took over his case. The law under which they did this is used frequently in Philadelphia. After three felony convictions involving violence or the "possibility" of violence, an individual is classified as an "armed career criminal." The next felony involving "interstate commerce" triggers the move to federal court. Because the .357 magnum in Jamal's case came from out of state, the case went to federal court. Many people, particularly young Black and Latino men, are put in prison for decades because of this federal law.

Because Jamal is Mumia's son, he has endured paying the price of being the son of a Panther. Jamal continues to resist. At 36 years of age, he's just getting warmed up!

Once classified as an "armed career criminal" and moved to federal court, convictions carry a mandatory sentence of 15 years in prison without parole and a maximum of life in prison. Jamal was convicted on October 17, 1997 of possession of a weapon under this law. He plans to appeal this conviction. At his sentencing hearing, Rachel Wolkenstein, one of the attorneys for Mumia Abu-Jamal, was a character witness for Jamal. She told the court she had grown to know Jamal while defending

Continued on page 13

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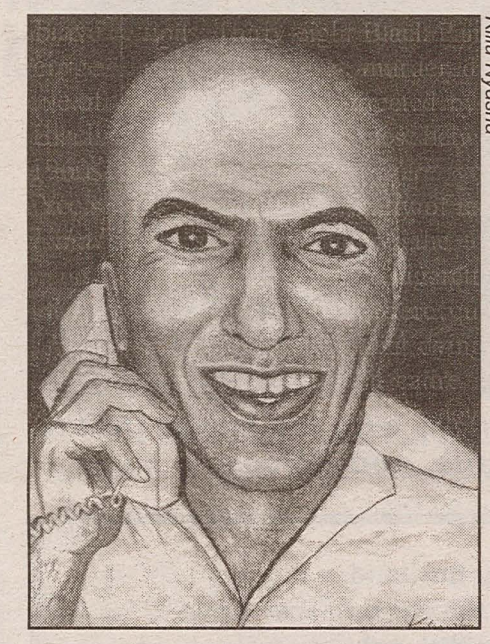
Letters to the Editor

HUGO "YOGI BEAR" PINELL


Killu Nyasha

Dear Editor,

I received a letter from Yogi dated October 3 that I feel compelled to share with you – along with a report from Georgia Schreiber of California Prison Focus who visited him last weekend. Known as one of the San Quentin Six, Yogi has been incarcerated since 1964!

We learned that Yogi is suffering from very high blood pressure. He's currently on medication for it, but we're very concerned for his health since he has endured solitary confinement (no phone calls, no contact visits, no yard, no company) for 37 years. Yogi has suffered the last 17 years in Pelican Bay's notorious SHU (Security Housing Unit) or Supermax, a windowless nightmare.

He wrote:

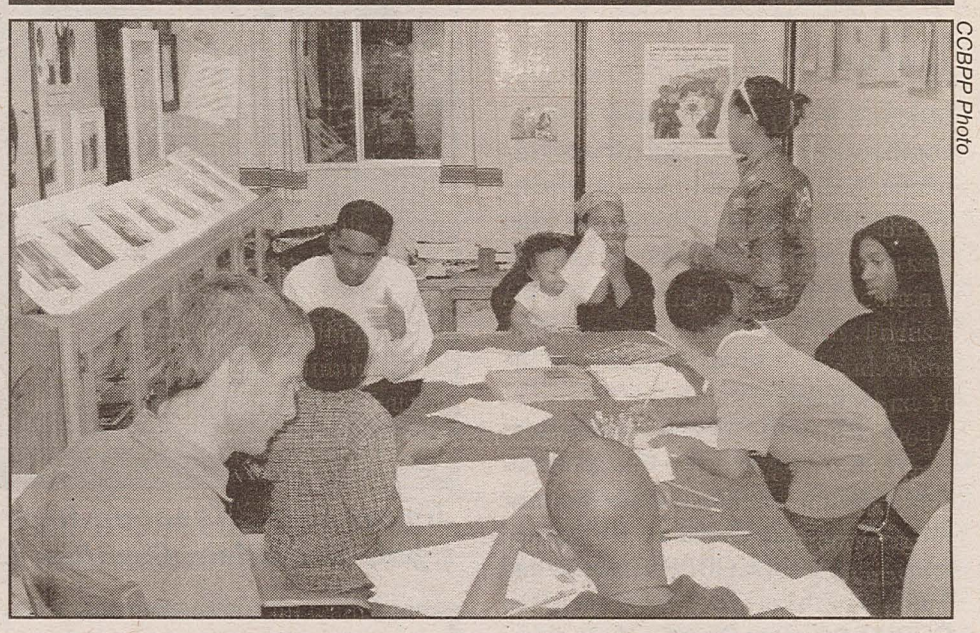
Dear Kiilu,

"Yes, great, the SF8 are out on bail. That case should be thrown out. And it is great that the Jena 6 are getting much love and support. Like you, I'm hoping that the new generation will be the one to make bigger and unified changes for our [movement] and the people, but ours, for sure, for that will give us the formula of how to help others. One big problem, which I'm sure is noticeable [sic] or pointed out to our youth is the fact too many elders, who used to be in the freedom struggle and should be active still, they are retired (?) or roaming around in the background, or labeled former this or former that as if the struggle is to be served up to a certain age? Very few of you, Beautiful People, stay the course and [are] still growing, therefore others can give you props but won't come along because they see no progress, hence the excuses or reasons why they go different ways. I don't know all of the reasons why not, but it hurts so deeply to see the horrible conditions we exist in, specially in Africa, Brazil and in the Islands.

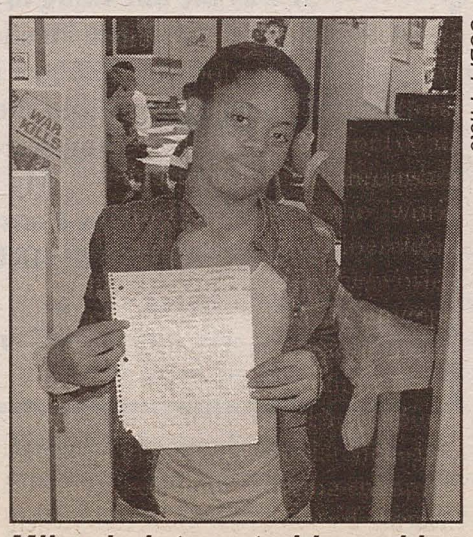
"I feel the same way you do, when it comes to my family being those who show me love, care and are there for me. I keep very much to myself in here and I can deal with it, for the longest, but it hurts and bothers me that the affiliation label is being used to keep me in these 4 units, used to keep me

Continued on page 14

Kid's Corner


CCBPP Photo

CCBBP volunteer Greg Kalkamis (left foreground) is a tutor for the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign, a membership benefit program of the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party.


CCBPP Photo

Milan is interested in making the community a better place to live by learning to communicate effectively.

The experience that I have had with the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program is great. When the kids get there they talk about anything that comes to mind. They get help with their studies from the tutors. They take as much time as the children need to understand what to do. The tutors can be very patient with them even if the kids are being obnoxious! When they are finally done with their homework, they might be able to play games if they have enough time. Finally after they are finished with the games, they will say good bye to all of the loving tutors and go home!

Milan

All power to the People!

SAN FRANCISCO LONGSHORE & WAREHOUSE UNION (LOCAL 10) is a proud sponsor of the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign, an all volunteer, free membership benefit program of the COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE FOR THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

CCBPP Photo

Front row from left: Tutors Natalia Skolnik and Aquiela Lewis; Students Cherish Cook, Eric Moody and Ryan Harvey; Administrative Assistant Melvin Johnson. Center front: Patricia Karim, Justin Hayden. Center right: Kay-C Allen, Ryan Hayden. Back row from left: CCBPP Chair Melvin Dickson; SF (ILWU) Local 10 Members Sabrina Giles and LV Ali; Tutors Greg Kalkamis and Craig DeVist.

Memoriam: Jimmy Slater

Continued from page 1

officials; yet economic and political conditions for blacks and all working people had continued to grow worse. We acted on those discussions after the destruction and demise of the Black Panther Party, in our mutual commitment to learn lessons from that history in order to carry on the struggle today.

In the early 1990s, Jimmy was active in organizing the first distribution network for *The Commemorator* throughout East Oakland. He opened up his home for CCBPP activities and was one of the original members of the CCBPP Advisory Board.

As a CCBPP member, Jimmy helped organize the annual Li'l Bobby Hutton Day in Oakland, enlisting the participation of many former BPP members, family and friends of Li'l Bobby Hutton and others who identified with what Hutton's life and death, at the hands of the Oakland police, represents to the people.

Jimmy was a hard worker. In the 1980s Jimmy labored as a construction worker in the East Bay, and then worked for the City of Oakland in construction for over 18 years and was a member of the city employees union. Jimmy was a past officer of the San Antonio Park Neighborhood Association.

He attended Laney College and became active in issues related to African American Studies and its practice in the community. He had many friends because he was very personable, principled and he showed that he really cared.

Jimmy originally came to Oakland in the early 70s from Cleveland, Ohio, where he was already an effective organizer. He was drafted to the BPP Oakland, California headquarters in 1972. This is when and where we first met. The Black Panther Party Central Committee had made the decision to mobilize and build a base of operations in Oakland and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Courtesy of the Slater Family

Jimmy Slater (second from right) with his family (left to right) Rashidah, Cynthia, Leslie, and Neico.

To my loving husband
We gave new meaning to the words "True Love"
It was unconditional
It was the one thing in life that we were sure of
We loved each other
And raised our children in the same loving manner
Allowing them to grow into the beautiful people they are today
You were my rock
My heart
My Constant in life
And I will GREATLY miss you

~Cynthia~

In Cleveland, Jimmy had helped organize the "get out the vote campaign" for the first Black mayor of that city, Mayor Carl Stokes. I had been drafted to come to Oakland from Seattle, Washington, along with other leading rank-and-file comrades from the Seattle-Tacoma area at the time. This was part of a larger strategic thrust the party was promoting to expand its Survival Programs across the nation.

I came to know Jimmy Slater from the start as a fellow comrade, someone who was concerned about the condition of the black and poor community in the United States and other exploited people around the world.

We were focused on our political struggles – our goals and the counter-revolutionary reaction that BPP's activities evoked.

"Out of a total of 295 police attacks against civil rights, human rights, and working class organizations, 233 or 79% were carried out against the Black Panther Party. Over $100 million of taxpayers' money was expended for COINTELPRO."

— Dr. Huey P. Newton (1977), *History of Consciousness* dissertation, p. 65, University of California at Santa Cruz

At the point in time that we organized the 1990 Unity Rally, the FBI Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) had succeeded in engineering the split between the West Coast and East Coast Panthers. The FBI had successfully pitted Huey and Eldridge against each other, as well as other BPP national leaders, through misinformation tactics, assassinations and other dirty tricks, such as framing BPP members for murders. FBI and local police departments across the land, in coordination with other government agencies, orchestrated counter intelligence operations to discredit the party and to "neutralize" the party leadership.

These operations and orchestrations were initially carried out by members of the Nixon administration and expanded to other government operatives who sought to destroy the BPP. Between 1968 and 1973 the nation was at the height of the fascist U.S. government's imperialistic policy in Southeast Asia where they carried out daily bombings that murdered thousands of children, women and men. The Black Panther Party actively advocated opposition to this U.S. foreign policy, while organizing and advancing our own Survival Programs in the low-income Black community.

By 1969, according to a Gallup Poll, over 73% of the American people were against the war in Vietnam. Revolutionaries around the world followed the political outcome of the war in Vietnam, recognizing that a defeat for U.S. imperialism would be a victory for the struggling working class people of the world, especially for struggling colonized people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as Blacks and minorities inside the United States.

The BPP built the Free Breakfast program, Free Clinics, Free Sickle Cell Anemia Testing Campaign (inside the U.S the program tested over 1 million people for the deadly disease.), the Free Busing to Prison Program, etc. Jimmy Slater was an avid volunteer at the BPP Oakland Community Center and all his children attended its school programs. The Black Panther Party had led a delegation of party members and community workers on a historic visit to China before the Nixon administration's 1972 visit.

The government response to all of this was increased Counter Intelligence Program activities, including assassina-

Continued on page 14

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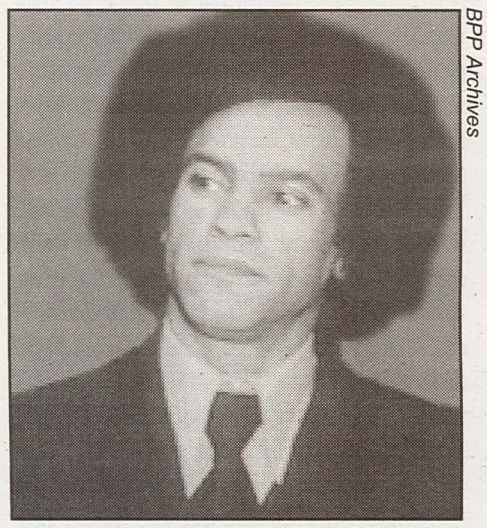
Archives

Statement: May 1, 1971

Huey's Corner



BPP Archives

Dr. Huey P. Newton

Editor's note: *Statement was made on May 1, 1971 in New Haven, Connecticut during the trial of Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins.*

The original vision of the Black Panther Party was to serve the needs of the oppressed people in our communities and defend them against their oppressors. When the party was initiated we knew that these goals would raise the consciousness of the people and motivate them to move more firmly towards their total liberation. We also recognized that we live in a country which has become one of the most repressive governments in the world; repressive in communities all over the world. We did not expect such a repressive government to stand idly by while the Black Panther Party went forward to the goal of serving the people. We expected repression.

We knew as a revolutionary vanguard, repression would be the reaction of our oppressors, but we recognized that the task of the revolutionist is difficult and his life is short. We were prepared then, as we are now, to give our all in the interest of oppressed people. We expected the repression to come from outside forces which have long held our communities in subjugation. However, the ideology of dialectical materialism helped us to understand that the contradictions surrounding the Party would create a force that would move us towards our goals. We also expected contradictions within the Party, for the oppressors use infiltrators and provocateurs to help them reach their evil ends. Even when the contradictions come from formerly loyal members of the Party, we see them as part of the process of development rather than in the negative terms the oppressors' media use to interpret them. Above all, we knew that through it all the Party would survive.

The Party would survive because it had the love and support of the people who saw their true interests expressed in the actions of the Party. The Party would also survive because it would be a political vehicle which continued to voice the interests of the people and serve as their advocates.

The importance of a structured political vehicle has always been apparent to us. When we went to Sacramento, we went for the purpose of educating the people and building of a permanent political vehicle to serve their true interests. In our recent communication with the North and South Vietnamese Revolutionary governments, they pointed out that they understood what we were doing and saw it as the correct strategy. They said that a "structured organization is related to politics as a shadow to a man." We recognize that the political machine in America has consistently required Black people to support it through paying taxes and fighting wars, but that same machine consistently refuses to serve the interests of the Black community. One of the problems is that the community does not have a structured organization or vehicle which serves its needs and represents the people's interest. You can no more have effective politics without a structured organization than you can have a man without his shadow. Oppressed Black people — the lumpenproletariat — did not have a structured organization to represent their true interests until the Black Panther Party arose from within the community, motivated by the needs and conditions of the people.

Across the country there have been coalitions of Black people and Black caucuses, but these have not served the people as political vehicles. They have merely served as bourgeois structures to get Black candidates into political office. Once elected, the machinery used to thrust these people into office simply passed out of existence or became ineffective insofar as serving the true interests of the Black oppressed people.

A truly revolutionary vehicle which will survive the repression it encounters daily is made up of a number of characteristics. First of all, there is a small but dedicated cadre of workers who are willing to devote their full time to the goals of the organization. Secondly, there is a distinct organized structure through which the cadre can function. It is this combination of structure and dedicated cadre which can maintain the machinery for meeting the people's needs. In this way a printing press can be maintained to review the events of the day and interpret them in a manner which serves the people. Information can be circulated about daily phenomena to inform the people of their true meaning. Programs of service can be carried out to deliver to the people the basic needs that are not met elsewhere because the lumpenproletariat are the victims of oppression and exploitation. A cadre and a structure, however, are not what make the political vehicle a revolutionary one. It is the revolutionary concepts which define and interpret phenomena, and establish the goals towards which a political vehicle will work. A revolutionary vehicle is in fact a revolutionary concept set into motion by a dedicated cadre through a particular organized structure.

Such a vehicle can survive repression because it can move in the necessary manner at the appropriate time. It can go underground if the conditions require, and it can rise up again. But it will always be motivated by love and dedication to the interests of the oppressed communities. Therefore the people will insure its survival, for only in that survival are their needs serviced. The structured and organized vehicle will guarantee the weathering of the test of internal and external contradictions.

The responsibility of such a political vehicle is clear. It is to function as a machine which serves the true interests of the oppressed people. This means that it must be ever aware of the needs of the communities of the oppressed and develop and execute the necessary programs to meet those needs. The Black Panther Party has done this through its basic Ten-Point Program. However, we recognize that revolution is a process and we cannot offer people conclusions—we must be ready to respond creatively to new conditions and new understandings. Therefore, we have developed our Free Breakfast Program, our Free Health Clinics, our Clothing and Shoe Programs, and our Buses to Prisons Program as well as others, responding to the obvious needs of the Black people. The overwhelmingly favorable response to these programs in every community is evidence that they are serving the true interests of the people.

Serving the true interests of the people also means that the political vehicle must stand between the people and the oppressive forces which prey upon them in such a manner that the administrators will have to give the appropriate response. Such articulation requires us to have a political organ which will express the interests of the people and interpret phenomena for them. Again, the existence of such a political vehicle is justified only so long as it serves the true interests of the people.

Continued on page 13

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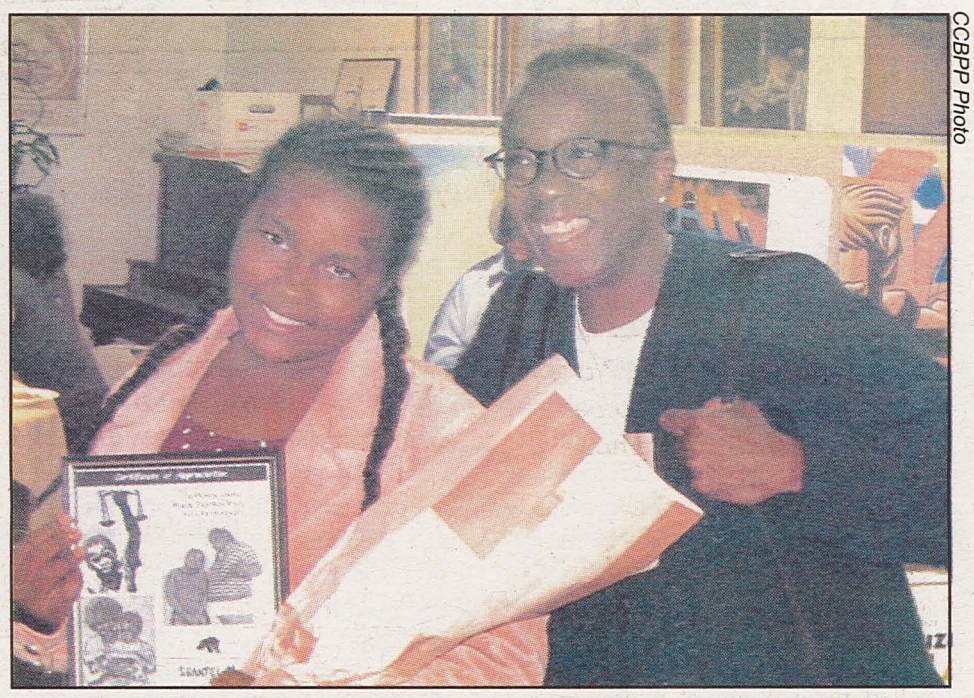
Artist Corner

CCBPP Photo

Shantel with her proud mom, Priscilla, at BPP 41st Anniversary.

BPP Founding 41st Anniversary Celebration Recognizes Young Photographer Shantel McNeal



CCBPP Photo

One year later after taking black and white photos below, 12 year-old photographer, Shantel McNeal (left), displays Certificate of Appreciation and bouquet of flowers, accompanied by mentor, Beverly Norman Cooper of SF Cameraworks's First Exposure.

By Commemorator Staff

Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) Chairman Melvin Dickson presented a Certificate of Appreciation on October 28th to the youngest special guest of the Panther 41st Anniversary Celebration: 12-year-old award-winning photographer, Shantel McNeal. The event was held at CCBPP's office in South Berkeley.

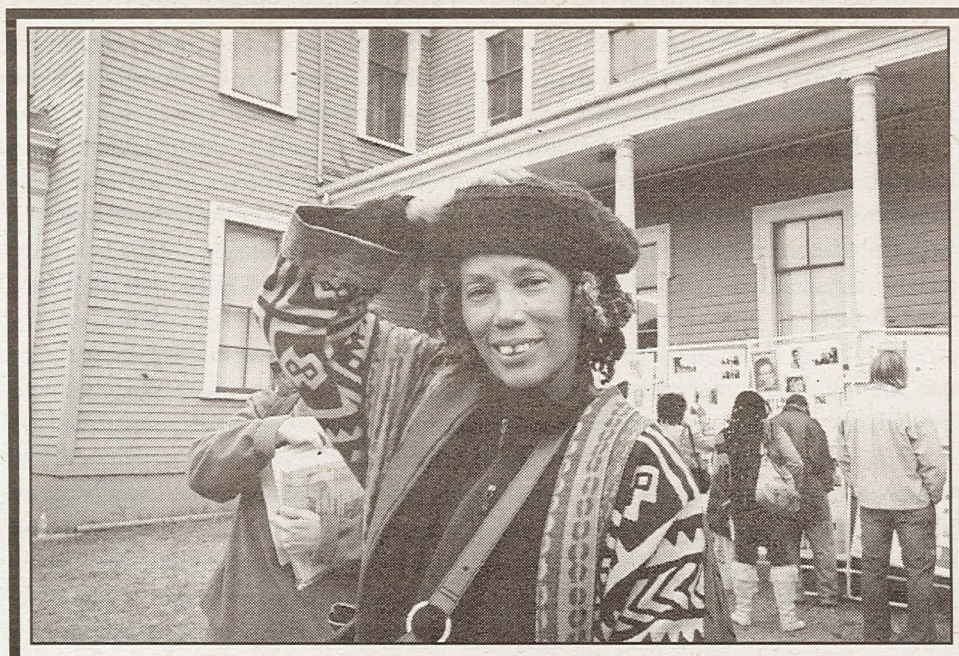
Shantel was one of 40 young people who had participated in a Youth Photo Workshop at the BPP 40th Anniversary Celebration held the preceding year. The workshop, sponsored by Aperture West's San Francisco Camerawork, was part of a program reaching out to youth from low-income Bay Area communities. Aperture West provided each young person with a disposable camera and instructed them on its use, and CCBPP organizers gave an orientation to the purpose and main activities of the upcoming day's events. The young people were then dispatched to mingle with the attendees of the event with encouragement to capture the spirit of the occasion on film.

"One of the participants, Shantel, was especially engaged in speaking with people, enthusiastically approaching members and taking portraits," explained Michelle Dunn Marsh of Aperture West. Shantel's photographs were featured at Mills College's Identity exhibit this past fall, along with those of various other Bay Area youths. The Exhibit was sponsored by First Exposure, a San Francisco youth mentoring program of which Shantel is a member.

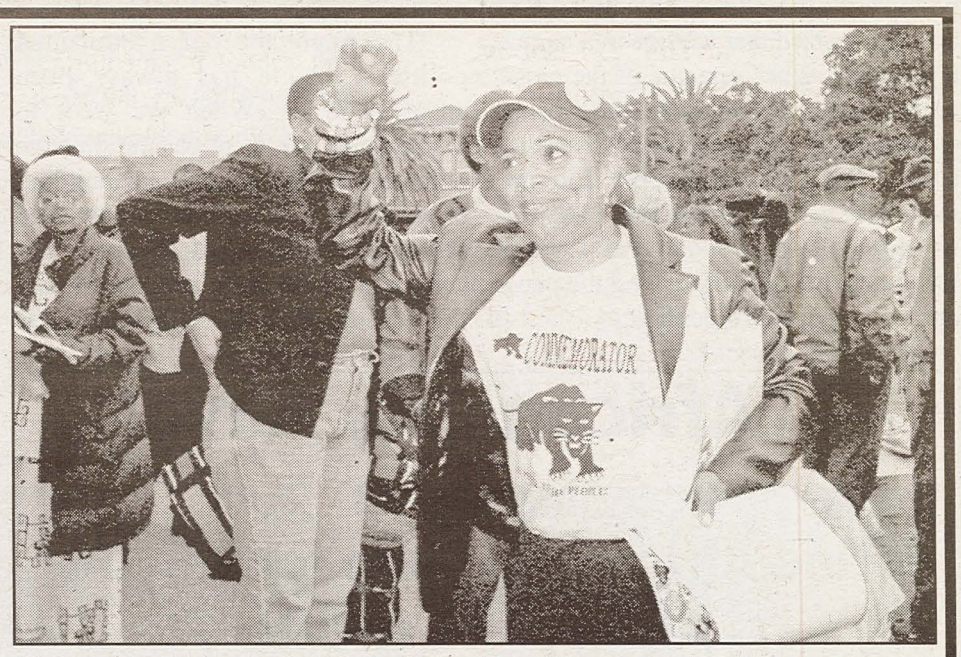
All Power to the People

"If we don't stand for something, we may fall for anything" — El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X)

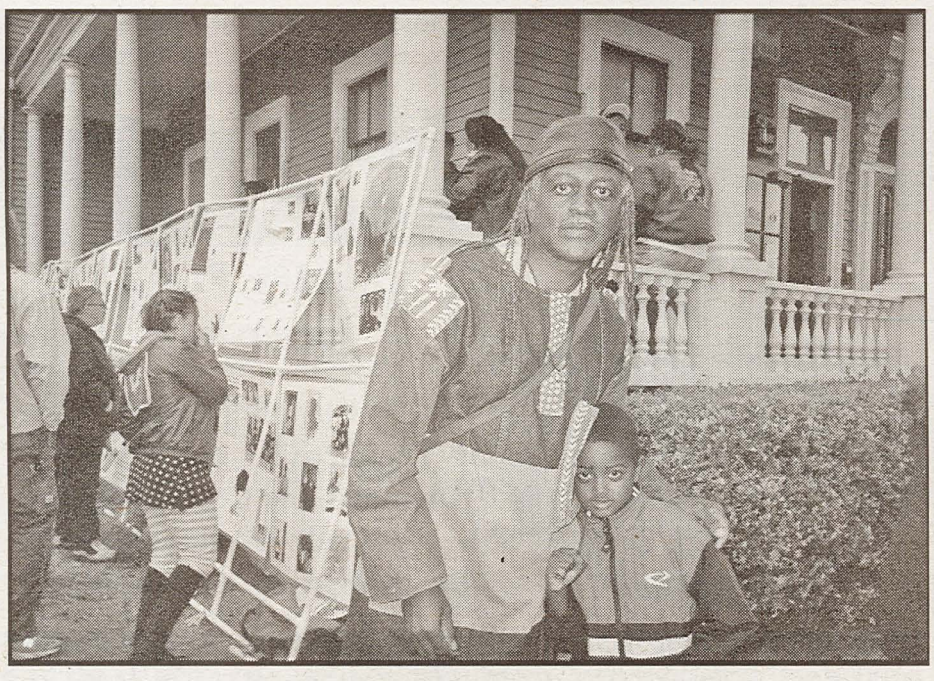
Black & white photographs below by Shantel McNeal were on display at Mills College throughout the summer of 2007



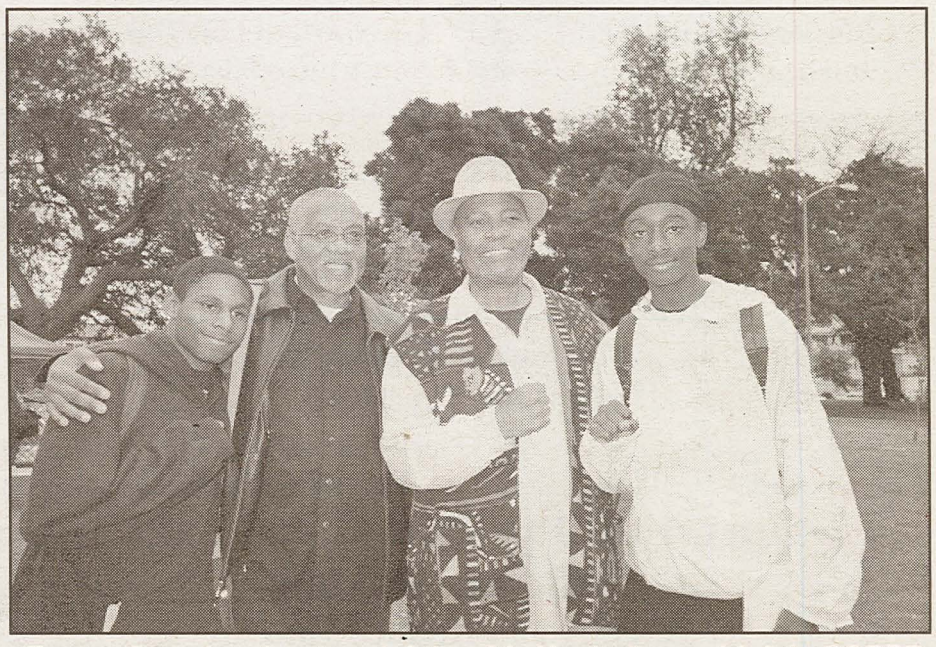
Adama Mosley, longtime Oakland resident, organizer, and radio personality, at BPP 40th Anniversary.



Marlene Krohn, at Black Panther Party 40th Anniversary. She is a longtime CCBPP organizer and Board member.



Jahahara Amen-RA Alkebulan-Ma'at, national Co-Chair and editor of Reparations Now, *with his son.*



Emory Douglas (center right), with Kush Amen (right), CCBPP volunteer, and Garry Owens (center left), a former member of the BPP Seattle Chapter, with his son (left).

Membership Campaign

Continued from page 1

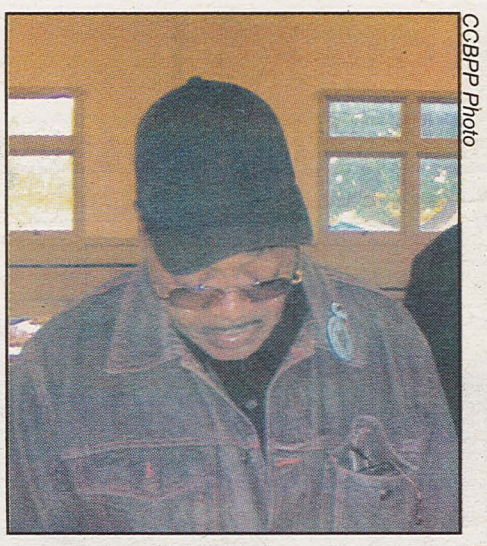
program organizers in Oakland and a cadre with the Seattle BPP branch, stated in a recent address to students at the University of California at Davis campus, "There's no way we can organize for what is rightfully ours if people do not study history to change its future course. And how can we do that if our people cannot read? We need organization to demand change in the political order of this country as laid out in the BPP Ten Point Program."

Building Membership Base Today in Historic BPP Birthplace

The West Oakland and South Berkeley neighborhoods are marked by urban removal, drive-by shootings, drug wars, high unemployment and poverty. A pattern noted by canvassers was that rents have gone up to the point that residents are being financially squeezed out of the neighborhood.

CCBPP Photo

Joyce Hutton, at The Li'l Bobby Hutton Day, speaking about the meaning of her uncle's life for the youth of today.



CCBPP Photo

Terry Cotton, former BPP organizer and CCBPP Board member, signs up a new CCBPP member at the August 4 celebration.

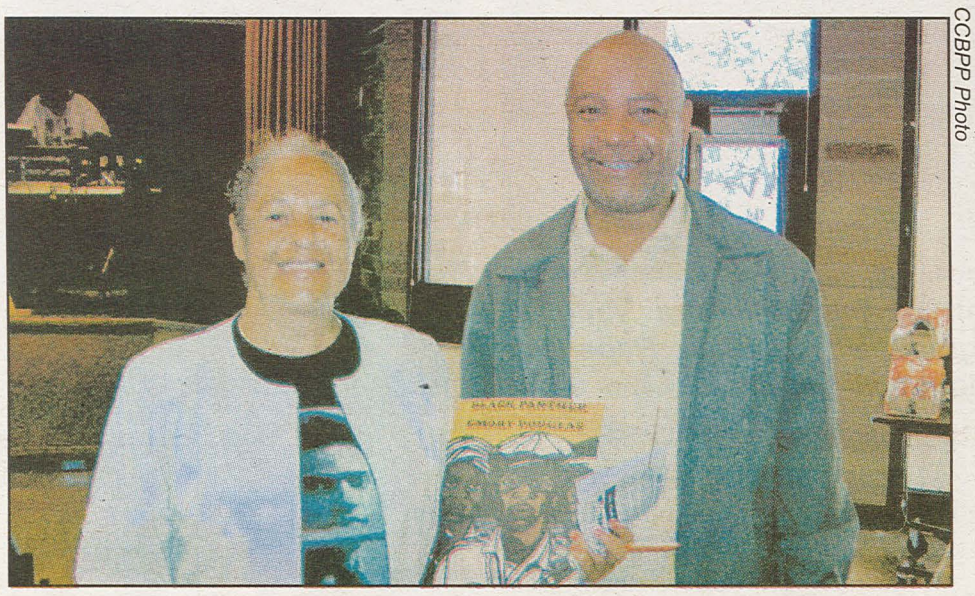
"Even rents at public housing projects have gone up," added Johnson. "Numerous households stated that they've been searching, but the so-called redevelopment and 'gentrification' of this mostly Black and Hispanic working class and low-income neighborhood is leaving people who need the housing the most with nowhere they can afford to go. Tensions run high when you do not know how you'll get enough money for the next rent check."

As a result of CCBPP's canvassing, new members enrolled their children in the literacy program and took on the task of distributing flyers and publicity posters. In South Berkeley, the canvassing also increased participation in CCBPP's after-school literacy sessions.

"Children and adults from the immediate community come into our office after school for mentoring, as well as computer literacy, and we have added tutoring in basic math and algebra," said Johnson.

CCBPP Photo

CCBPP volunteers and supporters Dorothy Bordenave (left) and Opal Pound at the Li'l Bobby Hutton Dinner & Award event.



CCBPP Photo

Li'l Bobby Hutton Day door prize winner Felisha Lee (left) displays History of the Black Panther Party *along with author Emory Douglas.*

CCBPP Photo

Children, youth, adults and elders at the Li'l Bobby Hutton Award Dinner in West Oakland, California, August 4, 2007.

Throughout the Membership Campaign, qualified volunteers were encouraged to become tutors in the literacy program and to sign up for the production staff and circulation team of *The Commemorator*, CCBPP's membership newspaper. Acting as an important bridge to communities all around the country, Johnson reported that subscribers and distributors consistently comment how they look forward to the next issue as a way to get information and political analysis of current events and organizing efforts.

> ***"I was not born then but I can feel and understand why he did what he did," 15 year-old Stephen Williams.***

As Monique Code, a CCBPP volunteer distributor now living in Queens, New York, said, *The Commemorator* "really comes over the top of all the different things going on, and gives a framework to understand everything that is going on in the country today."

Li'l Bobby Hutton Remembrances

A cluster of summer events constituted the Li'l Bobby Hutton Remembrance Celebration that promoted publicity for and resulted in enlistment of new volunteers and sponsors for CCBPP's free-of-charge Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program.

On July 8, 2007, CCBPP co-sponsored the Li'l Bobby Hutton Day at the West Oakland Library, along with the Family and Friends of Li'l Bobby Hutton Committee, headed up and coordinated by Joyce Hutton and Billy Goree, the niece and nephew of Li'l Bobby Hutton. One of the immediate goals of Family and Friends is to build a statue of the revolutionary martyr to be placed in DeFremery Park to show the significance of his short life as someone who made the supreme sacrifice for his beliefs. Li'l Bobby was gunned down by members of the Oakland Police Department April 6, 1968 for organizing his community to stand up for the Black Panther Party Ten Point Program and Platform.

Attendees spoke, rapped, sang and shared a meal together. "I was too young to remember my uncle when he was alive," stated Joyce, "but as I grew up, I learned about the greatness of his spirit as a revolutionary youth. I also learned about the Black Panther Party and its contribution to the Black community and to oppressed people around the world."

Continued on page 17

CCBPP Photo

Barbaretta Newton pays tribute to the Li'l Bobby Hutton Day Celebration, July 8, 2007.

CCBPP Photo

A powerhouse of inspirational organizers gathered at the 2007 Li'l Bobby Hutton Awards Dinner at DeFremery Park, Oakland: (left to right) poet Floria Dozier, renowned activist Yuri Kochiyama, poet Tureeda Mikell and journalist/artist Kiilu Nyasha.

Artist Corner

The Black Repertory Group: Then and Now

Courtesy of BRG

In the mid 1970s the Black Repertory Group (BRG) acquired use of a remodeled storefront on Alcatraz Avenue in South Berkeley, California.

By Kay-C Allen

Editor's note: *Twelve years ago* The Commemorator *interviewed Nora Vaughn, founder, visionary and principal inspiration for the Black Repertory Group (BRG). See "A Tribute to Performing Art, Nora Vaughn: A Tribute to Black History Month in the Bay Area," March 1995. The Repertory grew out of the Black religious experience and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and was established to promote Black culture and heritage.*

In this article Kay-C Allen, a volunteer tutor with the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP)'s Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign, interviews BRG's Development Director Sean Vaughn Scott, Nora Vaughn's grandson, and others involved with the program to bring us up to date on Black Repertory's struggle to provide young people in our community in particular with access to developing their artistic expression.

The Black Repertory Group (BRG), a fixture in the South Berkeley community, is the "longest running Black folklore group of its kind in the nation" says Development Director Sean Vaughn Scott. It has for several generations been a source of African American artistic and historical showcasing.

Nora Vaughn created BRG in 1964 out of programs she had inspired at the Downs Memorial United Methodist Church. After numerous seasons of Christmas and Easter pageants, the field of performances was extended to secular work. By the mid '70s the BRG had acquired use of a remodeled storefront on Alcatraz Avenue in Berkeley, California. Able to accommodate just under 100 people, the location provided the space to explore the works of more than "fifty Black writers from Langston Hughes to Charles Fuller." Growing out of that physical and artistic period were BRG's seeds of developing and educating the Black youth in South Berkeley, as a response to the neglect of such youth by the social systems of the day.

By October 1987, after diligent and tireless campaigning for donations to invest in a more suitable and permanent building, the Board of Directors, in cooperation with its founder, erected the BRG Cultural Arts Center on Adeline Street in Berkeley. Equipped with office, workshop, and rehearsal space, the facility also houses the Birel L.Vaughn Theater, the main stage, named after Nora Vaughn's husband.

Over the decades, the BRG has grown to include the "New Arts Experience" and several other programs, that take pride in fostering rising local Black artists, musicians, directors and all-around performers. In the spirit of Black heritage and culture, the continuation of the BRG is rooted in its historical inception, according to Scott. The aim is to instill and reinforce self-esteem in the participating young people, while offering the surrounding community a platform to connect and re-identify with the undeniable relevance and influence of Black America as a whole including acknowledging the importance of a familial approach to Black youth.

Sean Vaughn Scott knows in detail the value and power of strong family and community ties. A former linebacker for the Dallas Cowboys, he is the grandson of Nora Vaughn and speaks with conviction when recalling the past foundations along with the future goals and struggles of the BRG.

Allen: What is your current role with the BRG? How long have you had that position?

Scott: I'm the Development Director. I'm responsible for getting the money. I also produce and direct a lot of shows. I've been in this role since 1994. My mother, Mona Vaughn Scott, who is the Executive Director, and I run the BRG.

Allen: Being the grandson of Nora Vaughn, did you ever perform with the BRG back in the day? What was your favorite personal performance?

Scott: I've probably performed in over 1,000 plays. "Bubbling Brown Sugar" by Lofton Mitchell was one of my favorites. He actually gave us first refusal rights to the play. I performed that back in 1994. It's about the Harlem Renaissance. My character, Checkers, and his friend, Bill Sage, would catch the A train and take white people Uptown to the "hood" on tours of the Black life, for money of course.

"The people who want this building are powerful people. They're developers in cahoots with city officials and who knows who else" — Sean Vaughn Scott

Allen: Tell us more about the current New Arts Experience, its mission and goals.

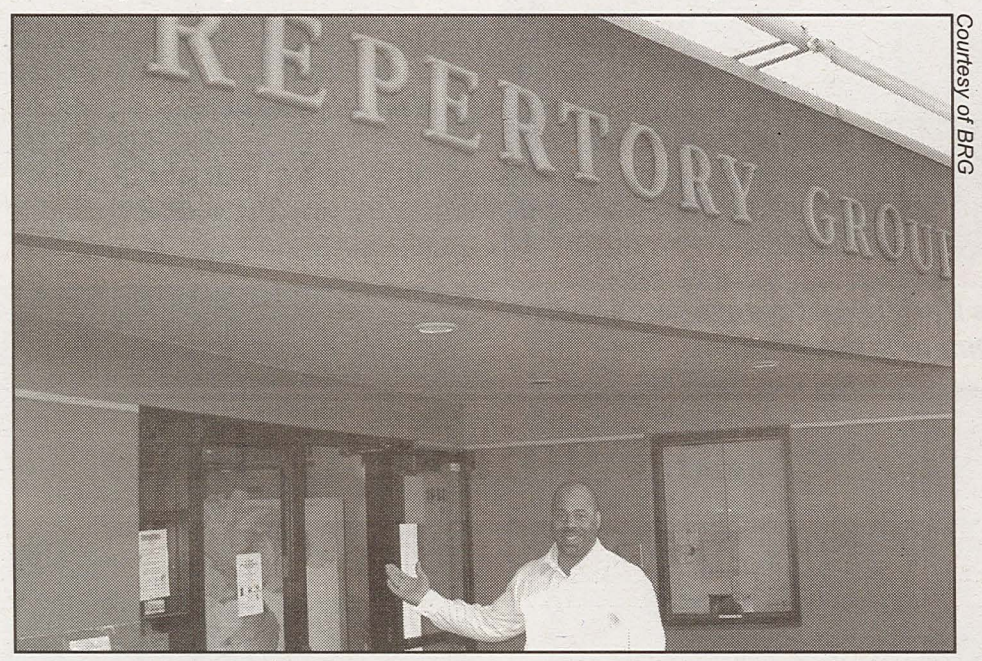
Scott: It's for people who are unpublished and it just moves forward from there. The work is produced on the second stage. There is an emphasis on Black artists. A white person is eligible if the play is about Black people. Otherwise, they can rent the facility.

Allen: The BRG just recently wrapped up the Summer Day Camp (SDC) for Arts. What was the focus of that program?

Scott: It was the largest city youth camp and largest job placement camp county-wide. We provided work for 20 participants (interns) from four different employment programs. The SDC was set up like a Broadway production camp. What we did was perform as if we were on Broadway. There were two shows, one at 10 a.m. and one at 1 p.m. every day. It was an eight-week program; the first four weeks the kids rehearsed. By the fifth week shows were booked. Every day they were getting ready. There were 108 youths total, including the 20 interns.

The kids performed The Lion King this year. They made the masks themselves. There was an Ethiopian

Continued on page 15



Courtesy of BRG

Sean Vaughn Scott, grandson of founder Nora Vaughn, administrates and directs programs at the Black Repertory Group along with his mother, Mona Vaughn Scott.

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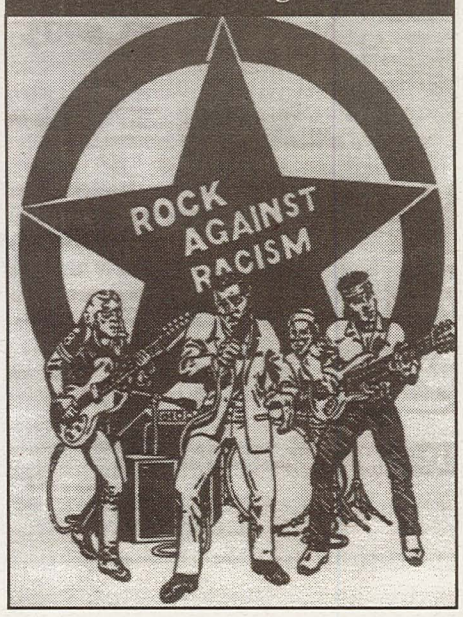

Jamal Hart

Continued from Page 6

his father and cited evidence that Philadelphia police, members of the Fraternal Order of Police, had a history of animosity toward Jamal.

Wolkenstein explained that when Jamal went to New York City to attend a major fundraising event for his father's legal expenses, Philadelphia police also were there and "baited and harassed" Jamal because he was Mumia's son.

Jamal reaffirmed his innocence. He spoke about his earlier convictions. He said he had always been advised by court-appointed attorneys to plead guilty because "You will be out before you know it. Don't worry about it" or "Take the plea, you will be able to watch your boy grow. Otherwise, you'll go in for five years." He cited case law that his constitutional rights had been violated because he was not made aware of his appeal rights, he was not aware that these convictions could later be used to label him an "armed career criminal" under the federal law. But the way the system is set up, the only thing that any of this testimony could influence was whether the judge would give Jamal a higher sentence than 15 years.

The judge read through the federal law and "counted" each prior criminal offense for a certain number of "points" in order to determine the sentence. He sentenced Jamal to 188 months (15 years, eight months) to 235 months (19 years, eight months). In this cold and calculated way, "the law" took 15 years from Jamal's life.

Jamal requested that he be allowed to do his time in a prison close to his family, but the judge said he could not "promise" that. When Jamal left the room, his mother called out, "I love you, son," and his sisters and brothers called out to him, too. As the judge counted out the sentence, reading from his law book, Jamal's brother Chris stood up. Shaken and angry, he yelled, "Why you gonna railroad my brother? You railroaded my father!" His family quickly gathered around, but he was jumped by two court officers. Within a minute, another eight guards came rushing through the door. Chris was taken into custody and arrested when the police produced an outstanding warrant from New Jersey. Everyone else was ordered out of the courtroom and off the floor. Court officers continued to harass Jamal's family and supporters in the lobby downstairs.

When I spoke with Francine Hart, Jamal's mother, not long ago, she said she was not informed of Jamal's whereabouts for the first 48 hours of his arrest. She eventually found out that he was located in a state jail in Virginia until he was sentenced to do Federal time. He was then sent to FCI Fairton in Fairton, New Jersey to serve his Federal time. Jamal has been transferred twice already. He went to a disciplinary facility in Rye Brook, New York for two years and had no incidents.

Now he is currently being held at FCI Schuylkill in Minersville, Pennsyvania He was transferred there in late October 2006.

At Minersville, he did not have any incidents that would prevent him from being transferred. Jamal's understanding is he was supposed to be transferred to a low-level security facility in December 2006. It was declined by his Case Manager, Walter Whalen. Not only that, it has been revealed recently by Jamal that Mr. Whalen has a picture of Mumia on his office wall with a caption that reads (to paraphrase): "He has convinced the world that he is innocent. He is guilty of the murder of a police officer." He was involved in a provoked fight by an agent provocateur in April 2007. The reason: Jamal went over his Case Manager's head to get the answer he was looking for. Then suddenly, Jamal ends up in a fight.

Because Jamal is Mumia's son, he has endured paying the price of being the son of a Panther. Jamal continues to resist. At 36 years of age, he's just getting warmed up!

Show a brother some love and let him know you support him in his ongoing struggle for his freedom. His address is as follows:

Jamal Hart #50597-066
FCI Schuylkill
P.O. Box 759
Minersville, PA 17954-0759

Monique Code
New York, NY
All Power to the People!

Huey's Corner

Continued from page 9

Serving the true interests of the people, however, does not mean that the vehicle is simply a reflector of public opinion, for the opinions of the people have often been molded and directed against their own self interests by slick politicians and exploitative educators. Their diversion tactics often lead the people down blind alleys or onto tangents which take them away from their true goals. We can easily see this when we apply the concept of American democracy to the Black community.

Democracy in America (bourgeois democracy) means nothing more than the domination of the majority over the minority. This is why black people can cast votes all year long but if the majority is against us, we suffer. Then the politicians and educators try to deceive the community with statements such as "It's rule by the majority, but the rights of the minority are protected." If, in fact, participating in the democratic process in America were in the interest of the Black community there would be no need for a Free Breakfast Program, there would be no need for Free Health Clinics or any of the other programs we have developed to meet the people's needs. The rights of the minority are "protected" by the standards of the bourgeois government, and anything which is not in their interest is not permitted. This may be democratic for the majority, but for the minority it has the same effect as fascism. When the majority decreed that we should be slaves, we were slaves—where was the democracy in slavery for us? When the majority decreed that we should pay taxes, fight and die in wars, and be given inferior and racist education against our interests, we got all of these things. Where is democracy for us in any of that? Our children still die, our youth still suffer from malnutrition, our middle-aged people still suffer from sickle cell anemia, and our elderly still face unbearable poverty and hardship because they reach the twilight period of their lives with nothing to sustain them through these difficult times. Where is the democracy in any of this for Black people? Democracy means only that the majority will use us when they need us and cast us aside when they do not need us. A true understanding of the working and effect of American democracy for Black people will reveal most clearly that it is just the same as fascism for us. Our true interests and needs are not being served.

"Serving the true interests of the people, however, does not mean that the vehicle is simply a reflector of public opinion, for the opinions of the people have often been molded and directed against their own self interests..."
***Dr. Huey P. Newton,* To Die for The People**

The political vehicle of the people must be guided by a consistent ideology which represents nothing more than a systematic and organized set of principles for analyzing and interpreting objective phenomena. An ideology can only be accepted as valid if it delivers a true understanding of the phenomena which affect the lives of the people. The development of a wide variety of truths about the community, its internal development and the external forces surrounding it will lead then to a philosophy which will help orient us towards goals which are in the true interests of the people.

The Black Panther Party was born in a period of stress when Black people were moving away from the philosophy and strategy of non-violent action toward sterner actions. We dared to believe that we could offer the community a permanent political vehicle which would serve their needs and advocate their interests. We have met many foes; we have seen many enemies. We have been slandered, kidnapped, gagged, jailed and murdered. We know now, more than ever before, that the will of the people is greater than the technology and repression of those who are against the interests of the people. Therefore we know that we can and will continue to serve and educate the people.

All Power to the People!

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Hugo Pinell

Continued from page 7

from going to a main line where I can get regular fresh air, lots of sunshine, better food, and, more importantly, contact visits. I haven't had a contact visit since Dec. 1970. Would be great if I was in the same line with Ru [Ruchell Cinque Magee]. The weather there is warm the year around and it would be so easy for Mom, you, the family to visit regularly. The label is also being used by the board to deny me release. It's almost impossible to win a challenge of the label [gang affiliation]. All I can say is no, I'm not affiliated with any group of any kind, and ask them to show me my name on anything or produce a source I can question. And they say they don't need my signature on any document. That all they need are sources who say I'm affiliated, sources who cannot be revealed for security reasons?! I'm stuck in the most difficult of situations, Sis, because I want so badly to touch Mom. Not only that, her condition is frail, and if I can't be home, I should be able to touch her and I know that would give more strength and determination to hold on…" Isn't nearly 44 years enough?!?

For more information on Yogi Bear, go to www.hugopinell.org.

Please write letters, make phone calls, make a fuss about the ongoing torture – yes torture, extreme isolation and sensory deprivation – of this brave brother who was one of George Jackson's closest comrades and one of the soldiers who stood up when Black prisoners were under fire in the 1960s and early '70s. (See Minh Yee's *Melancholy History of Soledad Prison.*)

Kiilu Nyasha

(Editor's note: Kiilu Nyasha is a regular contributor to The Commemorator *and other Bay Area publications. She is an activist on behalf of political prisoners and a regular correspondent with* ***Hugo Pinell*** *and other political prisoners in the US.)*

Please write to:

Robert Horel, Warden

Pelican Bay State Prison

P.O. Box 7000

Crescent City, CA. 95532

All Power to the People!

New Orleans Post-Katrina

Continued from page 3

out with concern for the people of New Orleans because the images from the news were horrible. New Orleans residents came back to their city expecting government aid, but did not receive the help they needed right away. Some progress has been made, but people still feel it isn't enough. One Bay Area writer wrote, "In many cases the state of post-Katrina New Orleans seems worse than it was a year before, though from some perspectives we can argue that things are better." A place where the Mardi Gras, Blues singer, and Jazz player touch souls left empty hearts with little hope. Where do they go from here? The question leaves minds wondering whether or not post-Katrina will be another past where facts are forgotten.

Many viewers have argued about why this happened. We have yet to find a satisfying answer to why the levees had to rupture before anything could be done. Top officials in charge were aware of the danger. So why did the levees break? Many people who were affected the most lived in poverty and couldn't take their families to a safe haven when the threatening situations were about to occur.

How could the federal government allow something like this to happen to innocent people, especially when it was obvious it could have been prevented? Our people continue to be treated disrespectfully and unfairly because they are low-income families trying to survive in a racist society. Since the people of post-Katrina couldn't get immediate emergency responses for a calamity of that severity, how are they going to get a response to housing and jobs after the tragedy?

The residents that suffered the most should have the first rights to a decent, affordable neighborhood. Jobs with livable wages should be offered to the victims and it should continue to be that way because it still doesn't justify how many lives were lost that could have been prevented. Post-Katrina cannot be forgotten. This must not be only a painful memory, but kept so this kind of tragedy will never happen again.

All Power to the People!

Courtesy of Jacky Waks

Many damaged homes of African American and low-income people in New Orleans remain boarded-up and empty more than two years after Katrina.

Memoriam: Jimmy Slater

Continued from page 8

tions. Thirty-eight Black Panther Party members were murdered through covert activities directed by U.S. law enforcement agencies between 1968 and 1974.

Jimmy, like many of us from the old school, including the top leadership, was a heavy cigarette smoker back then. We all were quite young and didn't think about dying from illness. I, like most cadre members, believed that "I would never live to become a senior citizen." The profit-driven tobacco and advertising industries marketed cigarettes under the guise of manliness, sex appeal, youth and maturity to all classes, but particularly to working class people, fostering future cases of lung cancer and emphysema.

I last saw Jimmy alive in February 2007 at a candlelight vigil the family called together for his late son, called Leslie's Remembrance. Jimmy and Cynthia's son, Leslie, pre-deceased his father just last summer – Leslie was only 33-years old, a victim of street violence, who was robbed and murdered by some thug as he left work at night.

The remembrance this past February was held in an East Oakland parking lot on High Street, near International Boulevard, near the site where Leslie had worked and where he had been gunned down on July 20, 2006.

About 75 people had already gathered for the memorial vigil when Jimmy asked me to say a few words in memory of his son.

Leslie, whom I had known since he was born, was an especially kind person and a doer of good deeds for and with his family and friends. Leslie and his sister, Neico, had been students at the Black Panther's Oakland Comm-unity School throughout the mid-70s and early 80s, also in East Oakland. The Party had assigned me there for an eight-year period.

I recalled how Leslie was 17-years old when we were preparing for the 1990 Unity Rally. In addition to the overall tasks of organizing the event that brought together many former Panthers around the goals we hold in common, I gladly assumed the additional responsibility of coaching Leslie Slater and his sister Neico, along with their best friends, Li'l Albert and Nicole Pope (son and daughter of Albert and Aberlina Pope, close friends of the Slater family) on how to march and carry the Black Panther banner for the rally — impressing upon them the importance of the role they were to carry out that day. Leslie and Neico, Li'l Albert and Nicole went on to form CCBPP's Youth Committee, organizing youth talent shows in Oakland and South Berkeley.

As I was about to speak to the crowd to eulogize Leslie, it struck me that I had known Jimmy and the entire family for 35 years. At the time of Leslie's memorial, Jimmy and I had not seen each other for about a four-month period. I'd last seen him when we had both been engaged in BPP 40th Anniversary events throughout the month of October 2006. I noticed that Jimmy had lost a considerable amount of weight.

Pointing to me he said, "I've been down, brother-man! Let me tell you! That nicotine finally got to me. You don't want to have nothing to do with smoking them cancer sticks! Give them up! I'm telling you, you got to give them up!" Jimmy had lung cancer. Jimmy didn't know that I had already stopped smoking in the previous year or so.

Jimmy was a very proud family and community man. In recent years he was active in coaching Little League softball teams and attending to his family.

Through the Party, Jimmy had come to understand that the conditions poor people faced in the world were due to the nature of the international capitalistic, exploitative monopoly system. Jimmy came to understand that those exploitative conditions could only be changed and transformed through a socialist framework for the working class and that to have liberation and freedom or peace in the world, our class would have to assume power. The working class would never win liberation and freedom under the present system. The capitalist ruling class' very existence is based on keeping working people down so that the working class, and the various cultures and races within our class, cannot unite and fight to end — once and for all — this parasitical, class-based poverty, which is a system that promotes racial antagonism as status quo.

Jimmy remained true to his dedication to the implementation of the goals and principles of the BPP Ten Point Program to gain collective strength and continue to advance our struggle for power to end poverty inside the United States and worldwide. Jimmy maintained his stalwart political stance that he advanced throughout his life as best as he could under the circumstance of his life, and was an emulative example to everyone who struggles for justice.

Jimmy is survived by his devoted wife of 35 years, Cynthia A. Slater, daughter Neico S. Slater-Sa-Ra and son-in-law Kokahyi, daughter Rashidah K. Slater, brother Benjamin F. Slater, Jr. and sister-in-law Lois, and grandchildren Kwabena, Afiya, Abayomi, and Oluremi Sa-Ra, as well as a host of relatives and friends.

Jimmy's oldest daughter, Neico Sa-Ra with her husband Kokahyi, organized a gracious and loving funeral. I say now as I said there, "Jimmy was a person of his word. He kept his hands on the table where you could see them. He struggled and practiced what he preached."

Let all people serious about ending poverty and injustice redouble that practice of what we preach, and put all your time and energy into the work needed to *win* this struggle.

All Power to the People!

San Francisco 8: Six Released

Continued from page 4

was statements made by torture victim Ruben Scott. Despite being challenged by the Attorney General, Fannie Sanders, a longtime friend who has known O'Neal since childhood, was eloquent and unflappable in her testimony to O'Neal's important role in the community and to his family. The State prosecutor argued to increase bail for most defendants from $3 million to $5 million. O'Neal was released on bail reduced from $3 million to $200,000 after extensive statements were submitted to the court.

In a separate hearing, Attorney Richard Mazer presented the case for Richard Brown's bail reduction showing that Brown is not a flight risk due to his very deep community ties and the fact that he is no danger to the community.

Brown's many years of devotion to his family and community as well as his service as a Community Court Judge Arbitrator was emphasized in defense testimony "to counter the repetitive litany from the prosecutors who claim that the only issue relevant to bail is the 'killing of cops,'" according to a statement from the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, which coordinates the support work for the defense of the eight defendants. Judge Moscone reduced Brown's bail from $3 million to $450,000. Brown was released August 30.

On August 20, attorney John Philipsborn, speaking on behalf of Hank Jones, one of the 8, introduced Jones' family, his wife, daughters and sister. He described Jones' history: a San Francisco native, raised under difficult circumstances in a Chinatown hotel, joined the Marines, fought in Vietnam, and in 1968, Jones became a community activist struggling for fair housing, better schools and other human rights issues in the Black community. Along with Ray Boudreaux, Jones was a founder of the Black Student Union at San Francisco State. Judge Moscone reduced Jones' bail from $3 million to $600,000.

The next day, August 21, attorney Randy Montesano gave an impassioned presentation in support of Harold Taylor, whom he described as a man of integrity and peace. In addition to detailing the support that Taylor has from the community, Montesano focused on the government's distortion of the history regarding Taylor, on the significance of torture in his case, and the absurdity of the claim that Taylor and others pose a danger to the community. Harold Taylor's bail was reduced from $3 million to $350,000.

The following day, Ray Boudreaux's attorney Michael Burt argued that the only evidence against his client were the statements made by Ruben Scott who later recanted on the basis that he was tortured in New Orleans. Those false torture-coerced confessions were later thrown out by the federal court. Boudreaux's bail was reduced from $3 million to $385,000 by Judge Philip Moscone.

On September 21, 2007, Judge Moscone released Francisco Torres after reducing his bail from $3 million to $600,000. Attorney Chuck Bourdon presented Torres' family and described his personal history as a Vietnam Vet, longtime community organizer and devoted family member. "Cisco is loved by his community and is known as someone who helps everyone." Bourdon summarized the bail issue of "flight risk," emphasizing that the men are not flight risks because the case is totally weak. "Previous attempts at prosecution have been thrown out, and there is no new evidence." The defense cited the recent results of fingerprint tests with 'new' techniques that would implicate Torres. Current DNA testing contradicts those results. All of the DNA evidence obtained at the scene does not match any of the eight defendants. Result: No new evidence.

US Political Prisoners: Next Step

Hearings are now in progress to sort through issues of discovery. Discovery is the required process whereby the prosecution must provide their evidence and witness lists to the defense, so that the defense can independently examine and challenge the evidence. The defense can then bring any legal and constitutional challenges that contest the admissibility of statements made under torture and to challenge the 32-year delay in prosecuting this case since it was thrown out of court in 1975. All of these issues must be resolved before a pre-trial hearing can begin.

The prosecution applied the specious argument in court of likening their case against the SF 8 to the recent old-case prosecutions of crimes against Black communities and civil rights leaders in the South, whereby racists who murdered black activists in the 60's and were never prosecuted have now, after living their lives in freedom, finally been brought to justice 35 years later. Prosecutor Dave Druliner stated that they (the prosecutors) were just like the guys prosecuting those civil rights cases.

Ray Boudreaux's attorney, Michael Burt, sharply rebutted such claims, explaining that the difference in the southern cases was that those prosecutions were prevented by institutional racism – by prosecutors' refusal to pursue white supremacists that targeted Blacks. "Institutional racism didn't prevent this (the SF 8) prosecution for 35 years – what has changed is not the evidence," said Burt. The FBI has been "dogging all these men with hundreds of agents, pursuing this [alleged] conspiracy in the hopes that somebody would turn, and they haven't."

"The government's actions in this case, given the lack of evidence and reliance on hue and cry, character assassination, a clear case of double jeopardy and violation of their Constitutional rights, seems to be resting on the hope that someone will break down and give another false confession in exchange for immunity," said Dickson. "What these brothers have evidenced is that they have not forgotten the goal and principles of the BPP 10-Point Platform, nor have they forgotten the importance of unity among oppressed people."

It is up to us to tell the true story of how the government is getting away with conducting this prosecution with no evidence to back it up. National and international support is critical to prevent the isolation and fend off these divide and conquer tactics.

All Power to the People!

Black Repertory

Continued from page 12

mask maker to assist the children, and a dance teacher from West Africa choreographed the show. After the 1 p.m. show, there were opportunities sometimes for excursions, such as trips to the zoo, San Francisco beach, and different movies.

Allen: You mentioned in a previous interview that with regards to the Summer Program, you received no help (funding) from the city of Berkeley. Please elaborate.

Scott: In the late '90s there was a concerted effort to knock us out of the box. Our funders were receiving anonymous phone calls that the BRG wasn't serving the community, that we weren't doing a good job. This was at a time when we were doing very well with support. My grandmother had negotiated a $1 a year fee [to the BRG] for leasing this building. Therefore, the only way to get us out was to make us go broke. "Let's call up their funders and tell them the BRG is disconnected from the community." The people who want this building are powerful people. They're developers in cahoots with city officials and who knows who else. We were accused of nepotism. Kaiser has never been accused of nepotism. You know how many Kaisers [photos of Kaiser family members who were Kaiser employees] there are on their hospital walls?

CCBPP Photo

By 1987 Black Repertory Group, after diligent and tireless campaigning for donations by Nora Vaughn, erected its new Culture and Art Center, at 2120 Adeline Street in South Berkeley.

Allen: There's always a need for funding, as has been a historical theme for the BRG. What do you make of mainstream theaters having donors in excess of $100,000 such as the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Koret Foundation, while, financially speaking, the BRG had to stitch together a summer program that included community volunteers and supporters, a program that cost less than $30,000 to run?

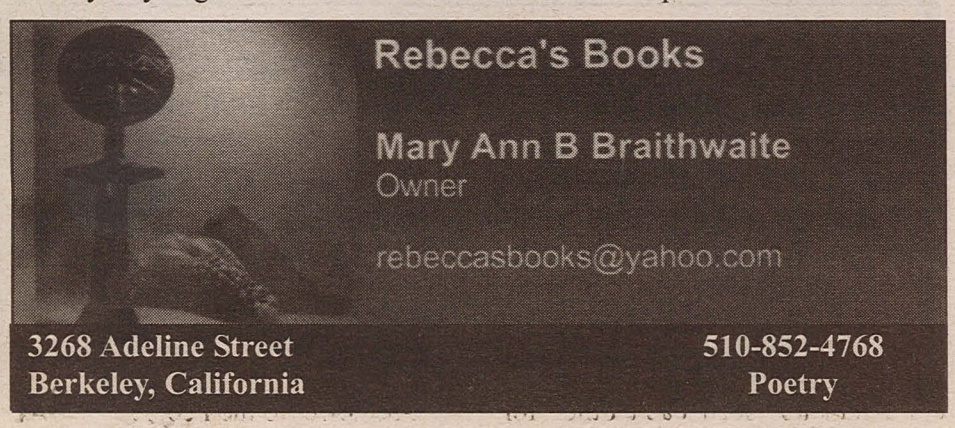
Scott: Yeah, even though it's been almost a decade, it's still in people's heads [those events from the late '90s]. Back then they told us if we were to take on the building ourselves, we wouldn't be able to maintain current service levels. They passed a list of names to auditors that they knew would speak negatively of the BRG. We survived and continue to survive due to our ability to generate revenue from renting the space, having shows, etc. I plan to shake the tree this year.

Allen: How is the BRG funded besides donations?

Scott: Once again by generating revenue and providing opportunities such as NAACP scholarships. There are also buy-outs. That's where someone/a company purchases bulk seats for a show and then has a theater party in our lobby to sell the tickets for a profit. We use that money to pay PG&E and the like.

There are a few funders [to the BRG] I must mention. Marina Drammer, a veteran donor from the L.E.F.

Continued on page 16



Homes, Savings, Dreams — Stolen

Continued from page 2

ing an ad targeted at first-time buyers, she jumped into a sub-prime adjustable-rate loan that started with a 9.95% interest rate that could jump to as much as 15.25%.

"I was getting older…. I wanted to have something for my kids," says Turner, adding that the lender made the process easy — until after I signed the documents.

"They inflated everything…. My income was more than what I expected. When I asked to go over the loan application, they said, 'You don't need to. All you need to do is sign it,'" Turner says.

Instead of the $1,200 monthly payments she expected, Turner faced $3,000 in loan, tax and condo fee bills. That was not only more than her monthly income, it was more than she had paid for an entire year's rent on her subsidized apartment. Turner lost her home. With the help of some relatives and friends she recently moved into a rental apartment.

Elizabeth Hope, a CCBPP volunteer and distributor of *The Commemorator*, who is a homeowner and has been active as an advocate for affordable housing, recently spoke with CCBPP staff about her experiences and some advice for those now struggling with a subprime mortgage. Hope explained that groups such as ACORN and the National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA) suggest a borrower look into the option of refinancing an Adjustable Rate Mortgage into a lower *fixed* rate, getting out of an adjustable rate contract. "When you go out to have your property refinanced," Hope explained, "you have to be very cautious… You have to get (a mortgage broker) who is thorough. Always take someone with you when you go to a broker's office as a witness because a lot of people have been taken.

"I attended a conference on this very topic, and they were talking about senior citizens as old as 89 years old who have been taken by some of the (brokers) who refinanced their properties. And instead of having a $60 monthly payment on their mortgage, now they have a $3,000 payment — for an 89-year-old person!"

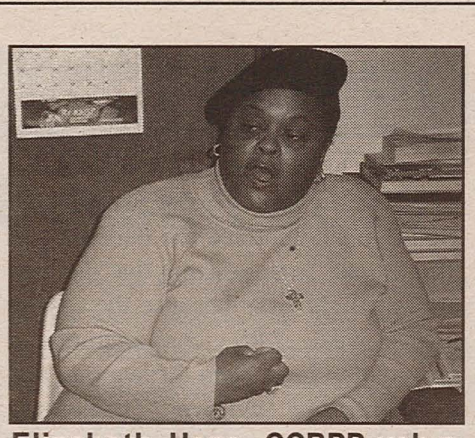
Millions of working people are losing everything they had. Some of these properties being foreclosed also had renters living in them, who are being evicted with no more than 30 days notice once the owner is foreclosed upon and loses the property.

Economic Policy Based on Short Term, Quick Profit — for Them

The wealthiest of the wealthy have much to gain from this "crisis." They are already bailing themselves out with the help of the feds.

And in this system, when money is being taken from one group, it is going into the hands of another. This "crisis" was created — at our expense — for their gain.

As more and more homes are being foreclosed, the market for houses for sale is becoming glutted and prices are going down. According to



Elizabeth Hope, CCBPP volunteer, talking at CCBPP's office about the wave of foreclosures.

The Wall Street Journal, about 45% of existing home sales are now of foreclosed homes; financial analysts predict the price of homes for sale will keep going down this coming year. The market value of homes owned by people in the neighborhood of those being foreclosed is lowered simply due to the proximity; those unforeclosed owners are suffering severe losses in equity.

For those who have capital to buy up property right now — just like those during the Great Depression — they can move in to purchase real estate, becoming even wealthier in the midst of growing impoverishment.

No Solutions Coming from Government

This is all part of the pyramid of fictitious capital upon which the international monopoly capitalist economic system is based. Rather than production of goods that people need, it is based on speculation, trading in debt, selling shares in futures trade and borrowing money off of money that has not been earned and does not actually exist. It is our people's lives that are destroyed and our families that end up on the street when their house-of-cards schemes fall apart.

President George Bush said, "I will not recommend help for those who invested unwisely."

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, trying to look like a hero, announced in late November an agreement with four major loan service companies to freeze the interest rates on certain Adjustable Rate Mortgages that are now resetting. However, this is a temporary freeze; it is not for the life of the loan. This freeze also only *applies* to a certain category of mortgages and those who have not yet fallen behind in any payments; it does not include subprime loans, which is what the majority of Black and Hispanic and other low-income families have been taken by.

As CCBPP Administrative Assistant Melvin Johnson stated, "This is nothing but a high level Ponzi scheme run by the top capitalist class, who first promote low interest loans (entrapment), then they pull out the rug from under the struggling home owners to create a windfall by buying cheap today and 'flipping' the property for profit when the housing market starts to rise again."

If you want to be part of the fight to bring about the BPP Ten Point Program, call us at CCBPP: 510-652-7170.

All Power to the People!

Black Repertory

Continued from Page 15

Foundation, [a private foundation that support the creation and the presentation of contemporary work in the fields of visual art, performing art, new media, literary art, film, architecture and design] matched Paul Mooney's [a Black comedian] contribution to the Summer Program. Harry Karsten has been a long-time individual donor as well. The funding he provided was "stop-gap". It's just like it sounds; his donations were a stop to the gap we'd experienced in our funding! Another contributor I must mention is Sam Mills from the Mills Family Fund with the East Bay Community Foundation. He has donated [a substantial amount to us] since the late '90s. If not for his funding during the issues we had with the city back in the day, scenarios could have been a lot worse.

(The Commemorator also interviewed Paulette Hickerson and Clarence Ray Johnson, Jr., two exceptional performers with the BRG and Nora Burnette, Director of the Flaming Five [Drill Team]).

Allen: Sean has stated that volunteers and interns are the heart and soul of the BRG. How are volunteers recruited? How has the BRG been successful with volunteer longevity?

Paulette Hickerson: People, Black people want to get involved for the experience, the history, and the sharing. People come to learn that Whoopi Goldberg, Danny Glover and Katt Williams used to perform here. The BRG gives people a chance. You don't have to be a professional yet you get good experience. This is your teaching ground. Oh! A lot of recruitment happens through word of mouth.

Clarence Johnson: Volunteers clean up, help with props, help with cues during a show, [and] teach classes. I just finished teaching characterization classes with the Summer Day Camp.

I'm going to do it again next year. Volunteers also teach dance, drill, music, answer phones, hand out flyers, it's whatever.

Paulette Hickerson: The longevity part comes from volunteers having a passion for the arts, a passion for people, a passion for Black people. Mainly it helps keep the youngsters off the street. Giving back heals you too. You give back and get something out of it.

Allen: What other programs does the BRG offer to the youth (and/or adults)?

Nora Burnette: The Flaming Five is a drill team; drum corps and marching squad. It's been around for over 20 years and was a part of the Elks Foundation. We've traveled nationally extensively. We'll begin practicing at the BRG soon on Thursdays and Saturdays. There are still slots for children who have an interest. If they have a reasonable attention span, they're eligible to join!

Allen: I noted that the BRG also offers the following programs:

S.K.A.R. (Street Kids at Risk) offers theater training on social issues (HIV awareness, teen pregnancy, etc.) to a targeted population of children who live in homes and neighborhoods that are infected with drug abuse, violence and crime.

T.A.C.E. (Tutorial and Cultural Empowerment) is an after school program whose goal is to build positive self-esteem in elementary school kids.

Prop Shop is a program that, via increased education on the mechanics of stage crafting, links teens with potential employment opportunities through community mentoring.

H.E.T.T. (Health Education Through Theater) uses scripted work to explore adolescent topics such as anger management and peer pressure with an emphasis on psychodrama.

Allen: What can the community do to help raise awareness, get involved with the BRG?

Scott: People can come down and see how they can participate, whether it's volunteering, answering the phones, donating money, helping with production — you name it!

For more information please contact: The Black Repertory Group:

Sean Vaughn Scott
3201 Adeline Street
Berkeley, CA 94703

(1 Block SOUTH of Ashby/BART)
510-652-2120, 925-812-2787

All Power to the People!

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5696 San Pablo Ave.
Oakland CA 94608

Black History

Continued from page 5

They were brought as the cheapest possible form of labor — slaves. Once the capitalists abolished this form of chattel slavery, and hired us by the hour instead, we then were wage-slaves. After the Civil War and since, each and every time that labor in the US has tried to organize and left out Black workers from their organizing, or allowed any other part of the working class to remain unorganize and oppressed, labor has lost.

Our celebration has to be about uniting the many – and that's a broad net, a class-based net

Anytime and anywhere the U.S. labor movement ever won anything worth winning, it was when they militantly included those whose labor their common opponents most ruthlessly exploited: low-income African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, other immigrants, as well as Native Americans and women. Highly restrictive federal labor laws and administrative regulations, not coincidentally, make it extremely difficult and expensive for organized labor to make overt strategic, principled commitments to organize the lowest-paid workers — those working poor who are most in need of organization and yet are excluded by the dubious protections of national labor law.

Black slaves, servitude slaves, mineworkers, railroad workers farm workers and today's service, domestic and temporary workers provided the labor that built the country. And, today, the labor movement and the working poor in general are under attack in many ways, through many methods. Those in power continue to pit documented workers against undocumented workers, just as they pit white against black. It is always the oppressor's strategy to divide and conquer, in order to keep wages low, fear up, and misinformation and confusion at a high.

With international monopoly capitalism desperately attacking the international working class as never before, with prison labor on the rise, privatization and gentrification accelerating, they use racialism, i.e., institutionalized racism (and especially the criminal injustice system), as a device for the express purpose of maintaining the status quo. We must teach the history that tells that story, not as apologists who accept the line of the bourgeois ruling class, but as revolutionaries who believe in today's future, based on learning from the past experience of history.

Capitalists Exploit the Image of Black History Month

When one relies on the ruling class and its agents to certify our history, they will tell it as it benefits Wall Street. They promulgate the idealism that you can "make it" in the system of monopolistic capitalism if you just work harder to further exploit the labor of other working people for your personal gain. We must understand that the Malcolm X and Martin Luther King we study to advance our goals and objectives are not the same Martin Luther King and Malcolm X that appear in Wall Street's commercial images.

On the political scene, domestically and intercommunalistically, we recognize that the exploiters and oppressors are those who profit from our misery, building more prisons while exporting production, closing schools and health care facilities while they spend our tax money in foreign invasion, war and domination against other working people. This wealthy class of exploiters and international capitalists profiteer off of our people and our history, through the commercialization of Black History Month — but only if we allow them to do it.

Our celebration has to be about uniting the many — and that's a broad net, a class-based net — to defeat the few. This is a principle that crosses race, gender, religion and other issues of non-class origin. It will deny the exploiters the ability to divide and conquer the working class as a whole by pitting one group against another based on false criteria.

To win political solutions we must organize and lead the process of bringing about systemic class control for workers of all backgrounds in this country, and thereby provide the best material aid possible for the working people throughout the world, millions of people who continue to suffer because of the oppression of the U.S.-based or backed international monopoly capitalist system.

CCBPP and *The Commemorator* need FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME ORGANIZERS NOW! Volunteers and any type of support are also needed to circulate *The Commemorator,* to research, write and edit articles, to organize sponsors and contact community organizations, and to fight for the principles of the Black Panther Party 10-Point Program. Schedule a time to come in for an interview so we can discuss what you can do to aid the struggle for power and freedom in our communities.

All Power To The People!

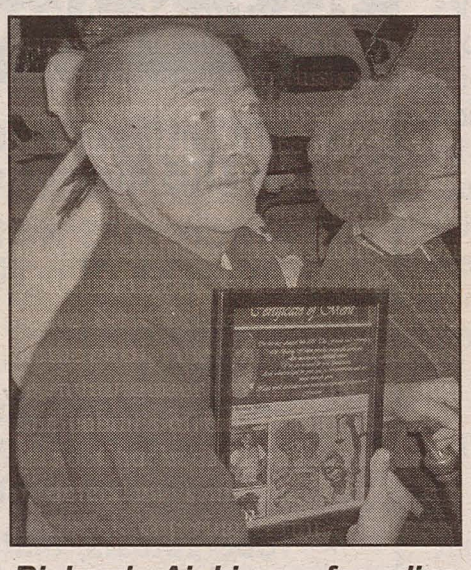
Membership Campaign

Continued from page 11

"I was not born then, but I can feel and understand why he did what he did," said 13 year-old Stephen Williams. "He wanted to change the conditions in the poor Black and oppressed communities. He joined with Huey Newton and Bobby Seale to end exploitation and oppression."

Former BPP leaders, including Emory Douglas, spoke with first-hand knowledge to express the immense significance of what Li'l Bobby Hutton represented as part of the legacy of the Black Panther Party. "Li'l Bobby was a great inspiration to the Black Panther Party and the community," stated Emory Douglas, former Black Panther Party Minister of Culture.

At the celebration, Emory Douglas, widely respected today for his contribution to the BPP movement, was the featured speaker. Douglas recently released a hardcover book, containing many illustrations from the original *The Black Panther Newspaper*. The book, *Black Panther - The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas,* published by Rizzoli International Publications, was a sought-after door-prize, along with *The Commemorator* T-shirts. Food and beverages were provided by Food Not Bombs, a national organization started in the Bay Area over 20 years ago that has a history of feeding homeless people throughout the Bay Area and around the country. Food Not Bombs also provided the food and drink for the BPP 41st Anniversary Celebration at the CCBPP office in South Berkeley.



CCBPP Photo

Richard Aioki, a founding former BPP member and Field Marshal displays his Li'l Bobby Certificate of Appreciation at the celebration.

Li'l Bobby Hutton Award Dinner

On August 4, 2007, CCBPP co-sponsored the Li'l Bobby Hutton Award Dinner along with the Family and Friends of Li'l Bobby Hutton. Volunteers were honored with certificates of appreciation. Present at the Award Dinner were Bobby Hutton's elder sister Judy Hutton and her son Charles, niece Joyce Hutton and former BPP members, such as noted Bay Area political activist Kiilu Nyasha and former BPP Field Marshal Richard Aoki, now a journalist and educator. Also in attendance was Yuri Kochiyama, a personal friend of Malcolm X who was with him when he died, and Tureeda Mikell, a noted Bay Area poet and teacher who gave a moving speech on language and communication.

Other award recipients were CCBPP volunteers Opal Pound, Dorothy Bordenave, Pam Thomas, Constance James, Bobby Coleman, Aquiela Lewis, Kush Amen and former BPP member and volunteer Terry Cotton.

Dickson, who is also the editor of *The Commemorator*, thanked everyone for attending and the volunteers for participating. He pointed out the importance of advancing the BPP legacy. Citing the Black Panther Party 10-Point Program: Point #5, Dickson stated the Panthers stood for "education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people knowledge of self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else."

BPP 41st Anniversary Celebration

At an event held October 28, 2007, Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party honored the 41st Anniversary of the founding of the BPP. The event was attended by Melvin Newton, brother of the late BPP Co-Founder Dr. Huey Newton; former BPP Field Marshal Richard Aoki and family members; and the remarkable Mother Ruth (Villa) Jones, a former social worker, Girl Scout Troup leader and an organizer of the Panther's seniors program, now over 100-years old and an activist to this day, plus some 50 CCBPP members and guests.

The program included a showing of the documentary, *Legacy of Torture*, an outstanding video produced by the San Francisco Archive about the San Francisco 8 case. (*See San Francisco 8 update in this issue.)*

"The Commemoration Committee is dedicated to speak out about and organize against the injustices the government is carrying out against those in our low-income communities," said Dickson. "The government continues to attack the people who dare to stand up to their destructive forces and that is what is happening today with the San Francisco 8 and Mumia cases."

"We will not forget our history," Dickson concluded. "We will organize to change it. CCBPP's membership drive promotes the idea of uniting the many to defeat the fascism of the few, starting with education. The Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign is one step in advancing our youth movement and organizing for true change in the interest of our communities."

For more information about becoming a CCBPP member, a distributor or subscriber to *The Commemorator*, participating in the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program for adults or youth, or for general information about volunteering with CCBPP and learning basic organizing methodology, call Melvin Johnson at 510-652-7170.

All Power to the People!

This page is sponsored by ACT UP

AIDS in Africa: New Plague or Old Illnesses of Poverty?

Racist HIV Myth Hides Ruthless U.S. Exploitation.

Unlike in the United States, AIDS in Africa is most frequently diagnosed based on four very imprecise clinical symptoms—diarrhea, fever, persistent cough, and weight loss greater than 10% over two months. *HIV antibody tests are not required to diagnose a case of African AIDS.* These four clinical symptoms are identical to the problems created by conditions of poverty that have troubled Africa and other developing areas of the world for centuries. In fact, symptoms of the so-called African AIDS epidemic are indistinguishable from the effects of malnutrition, unsanitary drinking and bathing water, and common curable conditions like malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, and parasitic infections.

Rather than solve the problems of African poverty caused by centuries of ruthless Western exploitation, the U.S. government insists on broadcasting the doomsday notion that Africa is suddenly gripped by a deadly, spreading sexual plague. According to these American health authorities, salvation from sickness can only be found in profitable pills manufactured by the white West and exported to black Africa.

America's Racist HIV Myth

The idea that AIDS originated in Africa is a popular myth without any scientific or epidemiological evidence. News reports that blame AIDS on African green monkeys are based upon elaborate speculation about species-jumping viruses rather than reliable proof. Tall tales about the spread of AIDS are promoted through the most vulgar and racist sexual stereotypes about promiscuous African people.

Still, the numbers speak for themselves. According to the 1999 *WHO Global HIV/AIDS Report,* the total number of AIDS cases in Africa virtually equals the total number of cases in America even though Africa, with its 650 million citizens, has more than two times the population of the United States. Africa is often cited as a worst case example of what could happen in America despite figures demonstrating that 99.5% of Africans do not have AIDS, and among Africans who test HIV positive, 97% do not have AIDS.

While Africa is the frequent target of damaging AIDS media reports, the total number of cases on the continent is relatively small. For example, from 1981 through 1999 cumulative AIDS cases for South Africa, the area claimed hardest hit by HIV, were just 12,825.

Exporting Extermination: AIDS Pills Kill!

It is undeniable that experimental AIDS treatments like protease inhibitors and AZT are all highly toxic, dangerous products. Strokes, muscle wasting, anemia, physical deformities, dementia, birth defects, organ failure, and death are some of the "side effects" of these poisons. Thousands of gay men in the 1980s and 1990s died from AZT poisoning. Now the U.S. State Department has elevated AIDS to the level of a threat to national security in order to gain public support for exporting AZT to pregnant African women. Outspoken leaders like South African President Thabo Mbeki—hard pressed to explain why developing nations stricken with famine and civil chaos should spend what little money they have on toxic anti-HIV drugs while millions starve—are relentlessly attacked as unfit and crazy by racist Western media outlets.

We invite you to investigate the growing international controversy over the cause and treatment of AIDS for yourself. Clip and mail the coupon below for a free copy of the groundbreaking book *What If Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS Was Wrong?* by AIDS survivor Christine Maggiore.

The Truth About African AIDS:

- **HIV antibody tests are not required for an AIDS diagnosis in Africa.**
- **African AIDS is diagnosed by four very imprecise clinical symptoms:**
  - **— Diarrhea**
  - **— Fever**
  - **— Persistent cough**
  - **— Weight loss greater than 10% over two months**
- **Tuberculosis, malaria, and measles far outnumber cases of AIDS in Africa.**
- **AIDS is not the leading cause of illness or death in any African nation.**

Fight the AID$ Fraud!

ACT UP San Francisco is the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power—a militant, direct action organization committed to ending the AIDS fraud. General body meetings are held every Monday night at 7:30 p.m. at 1884 Market Street and our medical marijuana dispensary is open 12:00 to 7:00 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Get involved. Join ACT UP! End the abuse of AIDS.

Clip and mail the coupon below to receive a free copy of the book *What If Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS Was Wrong?* or contact us for more information at www.actupsf.com!

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CCBPP STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) is committed to the goals of the Black Panther Party (BPP) as outlined in its Ten-Point Program which was written in 1966 by Party founders, Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

The Ten-Point Program outlines goals and objectives toward changing conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression in all low-income and working class communities in the U.S. and elsewhere, as the basis for unity and solidarity.

Also, the CCBPP is committed to the concept of Revolutionary Intercommunalism, introduced by Dr. Newton in 1970 at Boston College. Our Revolutionary Intercommunalism holds that there are basically two sides. On one side there is reactionary intercommunalism which presently holds the world's low-income and working communities under conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression by controlling the wealth, resources and institutions in order to maximize profits for the few. Huey identified this side as the leading reactionary side (the ruling class) which consists of a minority, fewer than five percent of the world population. Under these conditions, reactionary intercommunalism, by and large, keeps the poor and working communities on a cycle of degradation, under conditions of reaction, desperation and poverty, with no end in sight. Newton understood that in order to change these conditions and advance the economic and cultural interests of these oppressed communities of the world, disciplined organizations must be built from the bottom up, enabling these low-income and working communities to fight exploitation and oppression by any means necessary (this fight needs to start in the advanced industrialized U.S. because our nation leads the world in political reaction and economic exploitation). CCBPP advances and upholds the goals which the BPP outlined in its Ten-Point Program, and those goals are about ridding black ghettos and low-income and working communities of economic exploitation and political oppression, understanding that we can reach these goals only by seizing the time at the point of practice.

Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program
WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE

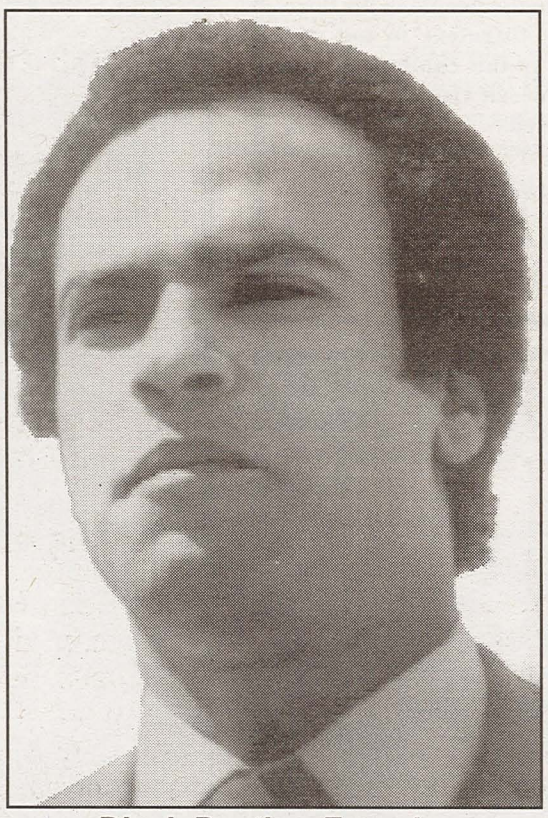
1. WE WANT FREEDOM, WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions that exist in our communities.

2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all its people and give a high standard of living.

3. WE WANT AN END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALIST OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that the racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency that will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.

4. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING, FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS. We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

5. WE WANT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.



Black Panther Founder, Dr. Huey P. Newton

6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE. We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities that will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.

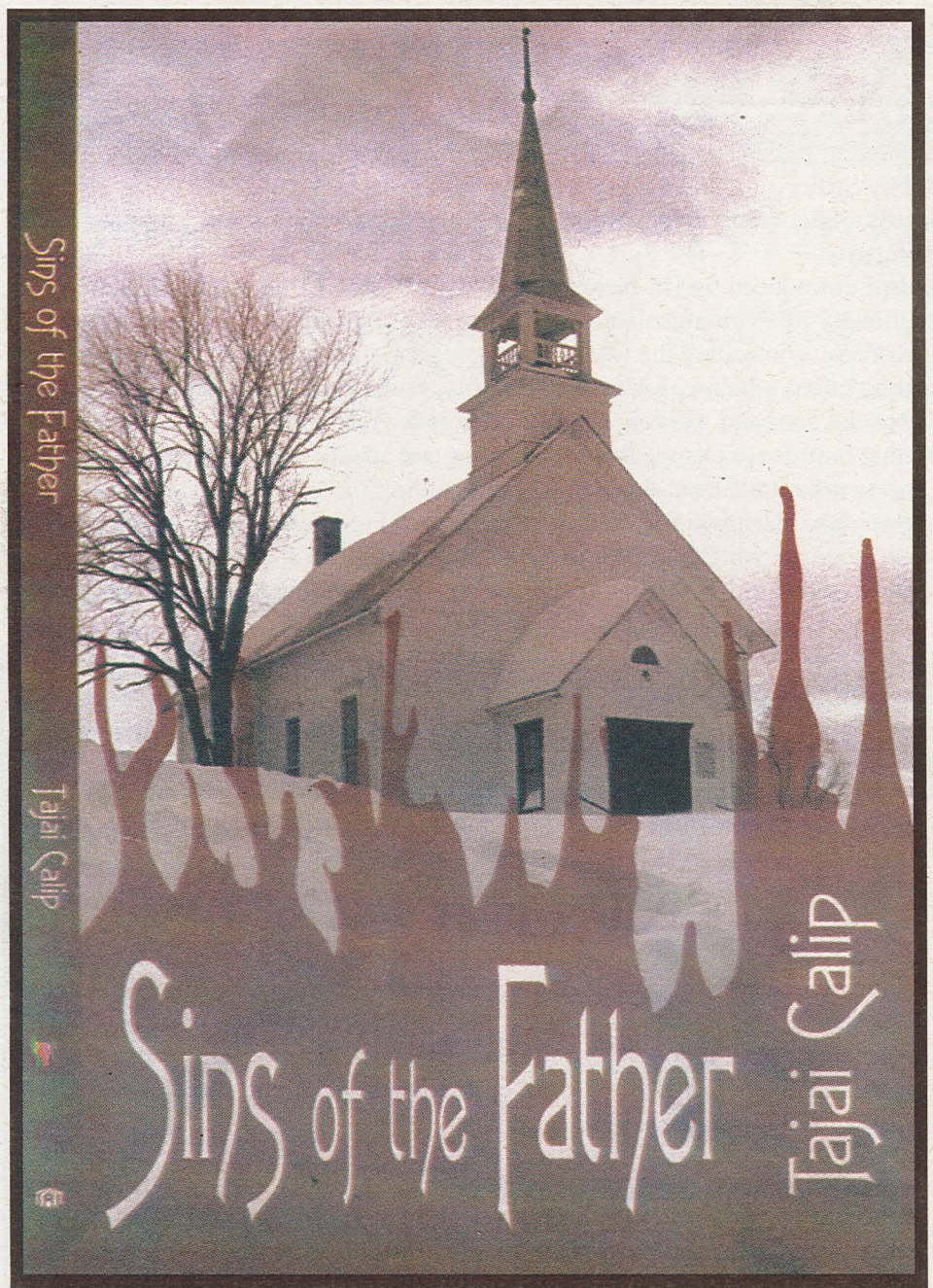
7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES. We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against Black people, other people of color, and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

8. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION. We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desires of the U. S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the U. S. government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars that it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND POOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY, AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS ARE CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY. We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in U. S. prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the U. S. military are the victims of oppressive conditions that are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons brought to trial that they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trials.

10. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY. When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism. It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.



Ronald Walter appeared to have it all. A beautiful wife, two lovely daughters, and a supportive flock of followers who worshiped the ground he walked on. This well-respected preacher known to most people as "Mr. Preacher," had a dark past that he constantly tried to contain, but the devil was giving him hell! Mr. Preacher tries to fight off demons damning his life, but forces from deep within grasp a firm hold on him dominating his goodness. In this novel you will find a powerful struggle between good and evil that ruins so many lives and families. Ronald Walter's stunning childhood is a blur to the people in his town. When Mr. Preacher's shocking secrets comes out, it threatens to not only destroy Mr. Preacher and his family, but many people in this community who loved and trusted him. Chilling details of betrayal and deceit visit the people in this town sending wake-up messages to everyone involved.

You must read this book! You can order it at: Arthorhouse.com:Tajai Calip, or have Marcus Book Store order it for you: 510-652-2344, or 415-346-4222

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Melvin Dickson
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Ericka Huggins
(Former BPP Leader)
Reverend Don Guest
(Pastor of San Francisco Glide Memorial Church)

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Where: Men of Valor Center

(formerly the Oakland Community Learning Center)
6118 International Blvd. Oakland, CA

When: Sunday, February 17, 2008
Time: 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm
A Benefit for *The Commemorator* Newspaper and the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign
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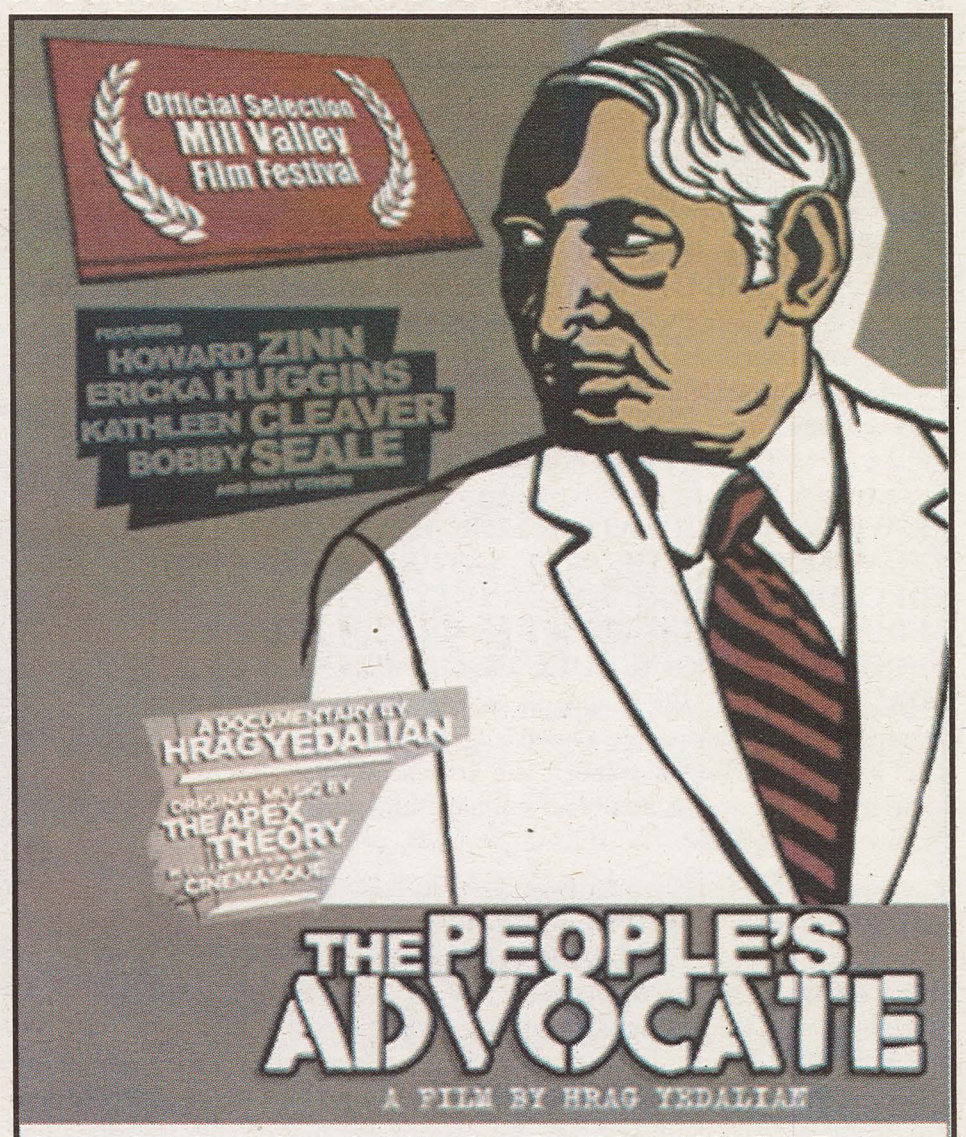

Remembered as a "genuine American hero" in a 1991 *San Francisco Examiner* editorial published shortly after his death, Charles R. Garry came to be known as "a life-long fighter for the underdog" whose clients "had two traits in common: They were outside the American mainstream, and they needed a strong lawyer." "The People's Advocate" chronicles Garry's fascinating life and successful career. The film's interviewees trace his life from his early days growing up as an Armenian in Fresno, California to his tragic experience in Jonestown, Guyana. Interweaving the interviews with extensive archival footage, the feature length documentary is structured around the significant chapters that defined Garry's life — all defining moments.